

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

*Edited by* ROBERT HERRING

JANUARY

## EDITORIAL

1941

JANUARY WILL BE older than it should be by the time this number appears. That is because Christmas comes but once a year but takes many weeks in doing it. One has to be intimately connected with the business of getting proofs through the post (let alone to press) to realize how little use December is as a working month for a January issue. To post by the 18th for delivery on the 25th is to have no month at all, and the middle of the week is not, to an editor's mind, the most helpful day on which Christmas can fall. So the Old Year will have been rung out—and how willingly most of us would wring it—long before this number appears. Before the next, we hope to be established in our new country offices. They have already been christened (by craters), and on occupation I hope to resume that punctual publication which readers have a right to expect.

At the same time, it hardly needs saying that many of our authors live in bombed-areas. A contributor who is lucky to escape with his life must be excused if he is late with his literature, and an article may be held up, through no fault of the writer, if he also has to be,

after being blown up, or out, while he wrote. Therefore, it may happen that work which has been announced for a number arrives too late, or does not arrive. But I have found that something else always turns up to take its place, and it is an encouraging sign that many of the young men, after a silence due to settling down, continue to write for us when they are called up. The lists on the inside of the front and back of this cover must be taken, therefore, as only indication of some of the plans that have been made for the New Year. We are always adding to our contributors, and that I take to be the surest way of increasing our subscribers.

Meanwhile, I thank readers and authors for their continued co-operation one with the other, for their patience with me, the go-between, and for their kindness ; particularly of those who so immediately took us in when we had no roof, or at any rate ceiling, over our heads. It is that which, more than anything, has enabled us to be, if not punctual, at least, in the words of one correspondent, "damned persistent".

# THE DIAL

(Part 2)

By MARIANNE MOORE

Besides humour in our correspondence, there was satire, as in A. E.'s reply to a suggestion that it was a long time since he had sent us work, "Hawks should not prey upon hawks." And an ostensibly formal humouresque of our own, concocted by Kenneth Burke, recurs to me—the answer to an advertising manager who complained that if books which had received long reviews and unanimous approbation elsewhere were to be damned at *The Dial* by brief notices and faint praise, might they not be damned somewhat more promptly? To this complaint from an acquaintance of Mr. Burke's who had not foreseen that someone he knew might be answering it, Mr. Burke said: "... Why not give *The Dial* credit. As you have said, under our silence the book went through five editions. Now that we have spoken there may never be a sixth. Further, we are happy to learn that whereas we had feared that our Briefer Mention was a week or two late, the continued success of the book has kept our comment green. We are, you might say, reviewing a reprint—a courtesy not all gazettes will afford you. . . . And are you, after all, so sure that a book benefits by having the reviews all let off at once like something gone wrong in the arsenal, followed by an eternity of charred silence."

And we were not without academic loyalty in the guise of reproof, one complainant—the author recently of some very good verse—taking us to task about a review which he considered "unfair to the author" in being "nothing but a warped summary" and "dangerous" as "a bad piece of work . . . sponsored by a magazine of

*The Dial's* reputation". Almost simultaneous with this letter we received from the ill-treated author one that said in conclusion: "And may I tell you how much I was pleased with A.A.A.'s review of — — —? Quite apart from the fact that it was kind, it seemed to me an almost miraculous 'summing-up'. I have always wondered if A.A.A. was a *nom de plume*. Will you extend my thanks to him or her?"

Occasional inadvertences, moreover, at the expense of the acting editor were not wanting; sundry inquiries requesting the attention of the Active Editor; a letter from one of our Spanish contributors beginning, "My respectable Miss": or resulting from statements about *The Dial* award as acknowledging a contribution to "letters", offers to provide such letters as we required.

It was an office truism that declined manuscript accompanied by a printed card had been read as carefully as manuscript returned with a letter. But there was the compliment of anger from those whose grievances were imaginary and whose grudges were real; who were so incurious in their reading as to accuse us of anti-Semitism, or hid salt between pages to test the intensiveness of our reading. But not all "contributors who were not allowed to contribute" bit the hand that had not fed them. One to whom Alyse Gregory had given advice replied that before submitting work to *The Dial* he had not known there was such a thing as editorial reciprocity, that he had rejection-slips enough "to paper the Washington Monument inside and out"; that at last, however, as the result of *The Dial's* encouragement, he was appearing regularly in the XYZ—(a fiction magazine of robust circulation). And I recall the generously fervent disappointment of a writer, whose work had

elicited suggestions, at having returned to him a cheque that he had enclosed saying it might be "used for a reckless meal".

Misunderstandings were with us in most instances like scepticism that "doubts in order to believe"; and anything in the way of ill-wishing fulminations was constantly neutralized by over-justice to us from other quarters; by such stringence against encroachment, as Raymond Mortimer's when he wondered if certain requested work might not be done more to our liking by someone else; and by his patience when *Dial* work of his was reprinted without his permission; by Gilbert Seldes's magnanimity toward a minor phase of collaboration, and L. A. G. Strong's willingness to believe that editorial crochets are not all of the devil; by Yvor Winters's probity of resistance and tincture of editorial virus; by such quixotry as Professor Saintsbury's when hesitating to incorporate in an article on Poe, material that Andrew Lang had not published—saying once an article had been declined he did not care to offer it "to the most different of editors"; by Professor Charles Sears Baldwin's acquiescent addendum in omitting a touch of humourous underlining, "You are not only good friends but good critics."

To some contributors—as to some non-contributors—*The Dial*, and I in particular, may have seemed quarrelsome, and it is regrettable that manners should be subordinated to matter. Mishaps and anomalies, however, but served to emphasize for me the untotoxic positiveness of most writers. And to-day previous victims of mine have to dread from me, as pre-empting the privilege of the last word, nothing more than solicitude that all of us may write better.

There were gaps in our symmetry of presentment—among experts as well as experts-to-be ; and there were anonymities and pseudonymities. The magazine's debt to Lisle Bell for brief reviews of major implication, was in inverse ratio to his anonymity ; and constant also to Henry McBride, Gilbert Seldes, Paul Rosenfeld, Padraic Colum, Charles Trueblood, our former editors, and certain other persons of special knowledge ; Dr. Watson writing under the concealment of W. C. Blum, translating a piece of French or providing briefer mentions with a quietness amounting to scandal. The foreign letter translations—unsigned in accordance with *Dial* practice—should make the ghost of the magazine intensively apologetic to him, to Scofield Thayer, to Kenneth Burke, Alexander Gunn, Eva Goldbeck, Hildegard Nagel, Ellen Thayer, and some two or three others. Scofield Thayer's contributions—verse and prose, and his providing German colour reproductions for use as frontispieces—in themselves justify Hugo von Hofmannthal's feeling that *The Dial* was “just the contrary of blasé and routinier.”

I think of Mr. McBride—his punctuality and his punctuation, each comma placed with unaccidental permanence, and the comfortable equability of his pitiless ultimatums. One does not lose that sense of “creeping up on the French”, of music, of poetry, of fiction, of society sparkle, that came with his visits to the office. He did not “specialize in frights”, nor in defamation, nor nurse grudges ; and too reverent to speak in religious accents often, could not trust himself to more than refer to personal losses, sentiment with him was so real.

Gaston Lachaise's stubbornness and naturalness were

a work of art above even the most important sculpture. Admitting to an undiminishing sense of burden that made frivolities or time-killings a sort of poison to him he was as deliberate as if a potion had put him under a spell. I remember his saying with almost primitive-tribal moroseness: "But I believe in a large amount of work"; as on another occasion: "Cats, I could learn a million of things from cats." And there was, *when* there was, E. E. Cummings, the really successful avoider of compromise, of scarecrow insincerity, of ordinary rubber-stamp hundred per cent deadness.

I think of Charles Sheeler coping with the difficulties of photographing, for reproduction, Lachaise's polished brass head of Scofield Thayer, mounted on glass—glitteringly complicated from any angle—and have never seen anything effected with less ado or greater care; these scientifically businesslike proceedings relating themselves perforce with the simplified aspect of the Bucks County Barn study by Charles Sheeler, and the often reproduced winding stair-turn.

Decorum, generosity, and some genial pictorial improvements to the proof-sheets, were matched in Gordon Craig by an æsthetic unsubservience well deserving the surname *crag* as synonym for *Craig*. I recall Ezra Pound's precision as translator of Boris de Schloezer—reinforced by an almost horrendous explicitness on returned proofs. But nothing supplants in recollection, the undoing linguistics and scholarly resourcefulness of Ellen Thayer as Assistant Editor; the inevitable occasional untender accusation of stupidity or neglect of author's revisions being found invariably to be reversible.

Padraic Colum's clemency and efflatus are not con-

fined to the printed page, and upon his visits to the office, routine atmosphere was transformed into one of discovery. And John Cowper Powys, inalienable verbalist and student of strangeness, inventor of the term "fairy cardinal" for Padraic Colum, seemed himself a supernatural being; so good a Samaritan, any other phase of endowment was almost an overplus. Indeed as has been said by Mrs. Watson of his conversation: "He is so intense, you don't know whether he's talking or listening." And his brother Llewelyn's dislike of "a naturalist with an umbrella", of shams and pickthank science, come back to one in connection with his gift for metaphor. At all events, one who has known the shallows of a tree-bordered stream, is not likely to forget his phrase, "the cider-coloured reaches of the Stour." And though suicidally kind to victims of injustice, he was as aloof from the world of non-books as some subterranean depth inhabited by fish without eyes.

Above all, for an æsthetically inflexible morality against "the nearly good enough"; for non-exploiting helpfulness to art and the artist, for living their own doctrine that "the love of letters knows no frontiers", Scofield Thayer and Dr. Watson stand foremost. One of my first recollections of their literary partnership was their support of James Joyce when *The Little Review* was censored for publishing *Ulysses*. "Our insistence that *The Dial's* award is not a prize is frequently taken to be a characteristic pedantry on our part," they said, but "a prize is something competed for; an award is given". And on another occasion, "it is given to afford the recipient an opportunity to do what he wishes and out of that to enrich and develop his work." Nor

was a gift ever more completely transferred without victimizing involvements.

As it was Abraham Lincoln's ideal to lift "artificial weights from all shoulders . . . and afford all an unfettered start," so here. And in lifting weights, money has a part. Contributions were paid for on acceptance; for prose, two cents a word; for verse, twenty dollars a page or part of a page; reviews for the Briefer Mention department, two dollars each. There were not special prices for special contributors—a phase of chivalry toward beginners that certain of them suspiciously disbelieved in. Any writing or translating by the editors was to be done without payment. And payment was computed in amounts that are multiples of five. For example, as stated in our manual for editorial reference: "if a manuscript counts up to \$15.98 or \$16.01 or \$18.01, the writer should be paid \$20.00; and if same is more than \$90.00 it should be computed in multiples of ten. But where a manuscript calls for less than one dollar more than \$15.00 or \$110.00, we pay \$15.00 or \$110.00, not \$20.00 or \$120.00."

Writing is an undertaking for the modest. Those of us employed at *The Dial* felt that the devisers of the organization we represented could do better than we, what we were trying to do, and we always will feel *The Dial's* strength of purpose toward straightness, crispness, and usefulness. "If," as has been said,<sup>1</sup> "it had rough seas to navigate because it chose to sail uncharted zones, the structure was but better tested"; and we think back with gladness to the days when we were part of it.

<sup>1</sup> Springfield, Illinois: *State Journal*, 28th July, 1929.

# BOOK OF THE WORDS

(Drury Lane, 1883-88)

By H. K. FISHER

DRURY LANE HAS been bombed and that has been seized upon as a blow that will strike at the heart of many Englishmen. Actually, we had ourselves been true to ourselves and, at the time of its recent reconstruction, destroyed most that made it architecturally interesting. As to its productions, they had scarcely within our lifetime been worthy of either its traditions or its resources. Nell and Mrs. Siddons notwithstanding, it was not at the Lane that you saw great acting ; Irving, Ellen Terry, Sarah Bernhardt, Duse were found elsewhere. You went to Drury Lane to see Dan Leno, Will Evans, Florence Smithson : Drury Lane stands for most people as pantomime. It is revered by most of us as the first theatre we went to, and we see it in our memory through a mist of filmy shawls brought as protection from fogs and chills after. No theatre has ever seemed the same since, for it lacked the Lane's powdered flunkies, the scent of our governess's violets and, often enough, the fairies elsewhere didn't fly. No theatre has ever produced a 'treat' that lasted quite so long, for it was soon after seven when we drew up there in our cabs, and eleven had struck before the clown threw to stretched hands the crackers which our own never caught . . . we were yawning by then and would willingly have changed places with the Sleeping Beauty as we begged never to be allowed, whatever happened, never ever, to stay awake so long again. . . .

What was pantomime and why, we never knew. We

had a dim suspicion that we had been told the fairy-tales, in order that we should be taken later to see them enacted in versions appealing chiefly to adults ; just as we had been made to read the Bible, in order that we should be taken to Church every Sunday. We discovered that our elders invariably thought the pantomime “was not as good as last year”, and so from the start, there was once again, in this as in other things, something else that had been going on before we had, something at whose beginning we hadn’t been present. What we had been taken to see turned out to be not as good as the others had seen the year before, and, since (it seemed), it became progressively worse each year, there was no consolation in anything the future might bring . . . When it brought us ballet, the same thing happened again. Theatre-going, we learnt, was, in Stevenson’s phrase, “long-drawn disenchantment.” The best we had missed. We had not known the hey-day.

## 2

The hey-day of the pantomime was Victorian. That much we know, and we can learn a good deal more from the books of words <sup>1</sup> of several Drury Lane productions of the years from 1883 to 1888. The hey-day was then past (I venture to think that it is the property of a hey-day that it should be. Even as a word, its origin appears lost in antiquity, given in the dictionary only as [?]). But those years were the years that our parents and, perhaps our grand-parents, remembered ; those were the pantomimes which were better than the ones we saw. Now, from these books, we can gauge a little of what they were like—unembellished by fond memory

<sup>1</sup> By E. L. Blanchard.

but helped, where need be, by imagination and the drawings of Pilotelli.

In 1883, the story was *Cinderella*. Kate Vaughan played the title role ; there was thus plenty of dancing. The Sisters (Brunetta and Blondina) were Herbert Campbell and Harry Nicholls, and the Prince, called Pastorelle and not Charming, was Miss Minnie Mario ; she and her sister Dot appeared frequently at the Lane. They were a music-hall act, and we may notice that, in this as in other ways, the practices of sixty years ago did not differ so much from our own as we may imagine. Pantomime, then as now, combed the music-halls and the musical-comedy stage for its stars ; Kate Vaughan had been in the burlesques at the Gaiety for seven years before this *Cinderella* and, in 1887, she played Lydia Languish and Lady Teazle. The songs, too, were drawn from "hits" of the day—*What Cheer*, *'Ria*, *Two Lovely Black Eyes*, and the rest, though often they had different words fitted to them. One convention which is purely Victorian, however, is given full observance in this pantomime—the Prince proposes in the Conservatory.

Few liberties are taken with the story ; it opens with the Baron forming a second marriage, and at the ball, the Spirit of Darkness (George Lupino) makes Cinderella late by putting the clock back ; apart from this, the scenes show the usual progression—The Moonlit Glen, the Royal Hunt, the Baronial Kitchen, the Black Castle, the Home of Light and Love. Drury Lane standards of production must have been in full swing, for there was a ballet of Kitchen Insects, Cinderella saw Visions in the Fire, and, drawn by "the smallest ponies to be found in Shetland, specially trained and imported for this scene",

she drove to the Ball against a panorama of moving scenery. The guests turned out to be fairy-tale characters, including Ricquet of the Tuft and Valentine and Orson, and we can imagine the grandeur of the procession they must have made, and the mounting enthusiasm with which they were greeted.

As for the Ball, was not Kate Vaughan described by the Dictionary of National Biography as "the greatest English dancer of her century"? We may be sure that full scope was given to her gift by the frequency of the word *Dance* after her songs. We must remember when we read the single word *Dance* in brackets, that those brackets enclose the "grace, imagination, and spirituality" for which she was famous. Dancing the Book of the Words cannot give us, any more than it can give us Dan Leno's "business", when he, too, comes on the scene. Indeed, we must remember that most of what makes up pantomime is not included between the covers; the gleam and glisten of the dresses; the glitter of the jewellery; the sparkle of the scenes; the lilt of the tunes; ballet and "business" alike, are left out of the Book of the Words and much that seems flat to read must, at the very moment of its flatness, have been made remarkable to see by some device of costume or scenery, of make-up or of comic invention.

Nevertheless, when all is said, and allowing for the fame of Kate Vaughan, it must be put on record that Cinderella, in 1883, made her first entrance singing

*"Papa, Papa,  
I'm my Papa's darling.  
Home from School now I have come  
My own Papa to see."*

Later she trilled *I am a giddy and a wilful little schoolgirl,*

and she put on her slippers to these lines spoken by the Fairy Electra—

“*Fear not, sweet maid, whate’er may come to pass  
These cannot break—they’re made of toughened glass.*”

Sentimental songs varied from *Ducky Darling* to *Dream Faces* and *Reign of the Roses*; there was even a number called *Charlestown Blues*, though that can hardly have been what we may now imagine. In addition, there were “jolly” outbursts by those strange Victorian beings, the “mashers”. In one song their ambition was to be “Johnnies”, but before that they were declaring—

“*Chappies are we!  
Chappies are we!  
Say! Shall we split, boys,  
A Soda and B.?*”

A year later, Kate Vaughan had married, and Fannie Leslie appeared as *Dick Whittington*, with Kate Munroe as Alice. Messrs. Nicholls and Campbell were the Idle Apprentice and the Cook, and Minnie Mario was Captain of the Ship. The chorus consisted of “Planets, Fairies, Real Live Lords, Pretty Shop Girls, etc.” The pantomime opened in the Abode of the Man in the Moon, where the subject was chosen by the Five Senses.

“*(With sense of smelling we can well dispense—  
No! All our audiences are folks of sense (scents).)*”

A trip was then made to Catland (a *Kittengarten* near the Mountains), for Selection of the Cat (Charles Lauri, jr.). No less than three separate Lord Mayor’s Shows were shown in Dick’s dream on Highgate Hill, and this must have been quite an elaborate scene, for the stage directions indicate—“Daylight increases—distant country shows signs of animation—Windmills begin to turn—Carts

move along the road—Flocks of sheep on the way to London—Scene closes on Picture.”

The finale gave a Procession of Companies of the City of London, Sir Richard Whittington at the end heading the Mercers’ Company, and the Harlequinade had three scenes—Regent Street, the Barracks, and Windsor Castle.

In 1885, *Aladdin*<sup>1</sup> offered Grace Huntley as the hero, with Kate Leamar as the Princess. Herbert Campbell and Harry Nicholls (as unfailing as the George Graves—Will Evans team of my own days) were Abanazar and Twankay, and as the Slave of the Ring, Charles Lauri, jr., at one moment impersonated “a Flying Bat and Demon Head, and Mr. Reuben Inch a Toad and Demon Frog. Phantom Fight of Forty Traps and Leaps in 2 minutes”. The scenery included The Magician’s Observatory, City of Pekin, Enchanted Cavern, the Swamp of the Dismal Demon, Fertile Plains with Lake in Distance (a hint of true Pollock), The Palace, and the Flying Palace in Egypt, which transformed to Aladdin’s Golden Dream. Among the songs were *The Oriental Masher*, *Cupid’s a Dodger*, *So Long as the World Goes Round*, and such a gem of poetic delicacy as

“*He will be true to her, lovey dovey,  
He’ll stick like glue to her till their lives are done.*”

The polka was introduced and for the pageant of “A Dream of Fair Women—Grand Ballet of the Riches of the Earth”, Waldteufel’s new valse, *Près de Toi*, was performed. It was declared that

“*In the land of the blue willow pattern plate  
All the joys of the world seem to concentrate.*”

The audiences seem to have agreed, for in the next

<sup>1</sup> “Electrical Effects by Mons. Trouvé and Miss McMullen.”

pantomime Aladdin turns up, saying that he has only had a "little holiday" since last Christmas—"They scarce would let me go. So many came in crowds to see the show" (and, of course, it has to be said that you could "hardly get *a lad in* anywhere"). In view of this success, another Eastern story was decided on, and so there was in 1886 *The Forty Thieves*.<sup>1</sup> This marked the appearance of Constance Gilchrist as Morgiana. Edith Bruce was Ganem; Minnie Mario, Sindbad; Harry Nicholls and Herbert Campbell, Ali Baba and his wife; and Charles Lauri, jr., was the Donkey. The scenery showed a Peep at Paradise (described as "A mythological representation of the Seventh Heaven of Mahomet"), The Depths of the Forest, and a Ruined Indian Temple where "a Suttee is about to take place." This changed to the Deck of a Man-of-War. In this, Mme. Aenea descended as the Spirit of Civilization. "Civilization to the Rescue. Inauguration of British Rule in India. Scene changes to Deck of a Gun Boat. Characteristic Dances by Children. Britannia welcomes her Colonies to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in the Temple of Fame, Grand Ballet, Finale and Chorus and Harlequinade Commences."

Despite all this, it may be noticed that sophistication is creeping in. The actors know a thing or two. "'Tis good form, this lady-killing," sings a principal, "Surely that cannot be wrong," and Ganem adjures, "O lime-light Man, turn on the Moon." By the next year, the girl is saying—

*"Some little spooning folks in front expect.  
Perhaps you'd best. I'll try and not object."*

<sup>1</sup> "Armour and Jewellery by Gutperle (Paris) and Kennedy and Philipps. The Banners by Kenning."

Once fairy-tale characters come down to earth, pantomime is on that downward path which means that each year it will be "not as good as last". It is still sufficiently prim to say—

*"This must be wrong, because it is so pleasant,"*

and then to sanction pleasure by prophecy—

*"Strange! 'Twas foretold that I should wed a peasant."*

The pantomime this year was *Puss in Boots*, with Charles Lauri again as a Cat, the famous Letty Lind as Jocelyn, the Miller's Son, and Miss Wadman as Princess Sweetarte. We may notice the appearance of the Griffith Brothers as a Donkey. Scenes provided Dreamland, The Princess's Boudoir, Love's Labyrinth, The Pavilion of Chivalry, The Bridal Toilet, The Golden Honeymoon, and The Bridal Bouquet.

This synopsis reads more like the revues of the Folies Bergères than a pantomime, and I think it may not be wholly wrong to attribute the increase of "adult-interest" to a change in authorship. Up to now, the pantomimes had been written by E. L. Blanchard, with Augustus Harris producing. In 1887 Harris not only produced but "invented the new version of the old story" and the year after, *Babes in the Wood* was "re-written" as well as "retold" by Harris, Blanchard being only in "collaboration".

This pantomime marked the first appearance of Dan Leno at Drury Lane (he continued annually until his death in 1904). It may be that new methods were called for. Certainly, with the arrival of Dan Leno, the comic element became uppermost. The Babes in this production were played by none other than the "comics", Nicholls and Campbell. The sentiment of the story was

thus shifted on to their nurse, Maid Marion (Florence Dysart) and Robin Hood (Harriet Vernon), but these had less inclination for romance than for repartee; their love-scenes were what would then have been called "up-to-date"—

*Marion. This is romantic.*

*Robin.*

*Well, love, it would be*

*Had I not barked my shins and grazed my knee.*

*Marion. Do you regret?*

*Robin.*

*Oh, no, but truth to tell*

*I might as well have rung the front door bell.*

*Marion. There were no poetry in that.*

*Robin.*

*Quite so!*

*But it would save a lot of trouble though."*

He reveals that he is an outlaw—

*"His hand against all men, all men 'gainst his,  
A prize set on his wretched life.*

*Marion.*

*Good biz!"*

With the love scenes thus being played for laughter, with the children made figures of fun, and the hero bragging, "as the hero of the piece, I'm bound to get the best of it," it is clear that the whole spirit of the pantomime has become nearer the burlesques. The year before, in *Puss in Boots*, Jocelyn, although his idle brothers were drunkards, sang a song extolling the virtues of tippling—

*"Champagne! Champagne! The drink of the gods!  
It gives you hot coppers, but what's the odds?"*

and the Queen observed: "Then you will never part from your own little tart." In fact, the standard of writing has gradually deteriorated. It might be thought that nothing could touch the bathos of this scene from *Dick Whittington* (1884)—

"Jupiter. *The winds have broken loose, there's no help for it.*  
*Venus. I fear a storm, I may say I abhor it.*  
*Spirit of Drury Lane. But idly talking won't save human lives.*  
*Have pity on the sailors—and their wives."*

The Princess's exit in *Aladdin* (1885), comes fairly close :

"Now to the bath, where mid sweet odorous vapours  
 I'll dream of love and read the fashion papers."

But even these are beaten by Robin Hood's discovery, in the *Babes*, of Cock Robin lying wounded—

"Ah, here's my gentle namesake! Why so sad?  
 What! the poor thing is dead! Too bad! Too bad!"

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*There's life there yet. Take this!*

*He breathes! That's good!*

*I've saved his life!*

[Enter the Good Fairy.]

G. F.

*You have, brave Robin Hood!"*

Personally, I would attribute some part of the falling off here evident to the fact that Augustus Harris, now writing, was primarily a producer. As the "words" become more inept, the "book" becomes more elaborate, and "effects" were his chief concern. *Babes in the Wood* has a Foresters' Fête, a Grand Procession, a Ballet of Toys, a Rose Queen Waltz, a Ballet of Birds, and the Panorama works overtime as the children trail through the wood. Moreover, as the producer gains the upper hand, the stories become more complex. *Dick Whittington* and *Cinderella* are simple stories; *Aladdin* can be made more elaborate, and by the time *Forty Thieves* is chosen, a great deal has to be done. The disadvantage of that story is that, however attractive the players, Ganem and Morgiana, the hero and heroine, are overshadowed by the subsidiary characters—Ali Baba and Cassim, and the Captain of the Thieves, who cannot be the hero but is

really the central character. It is very hard to keep your principal boy and girl in the centre of the picture—but it is easy to have lots of pictures for them to slip into. *Puss in Boots* can be a good story, but in the 1887 version, it is a weak imitation of *Whittington*, and the complications draw out the plot without providing really adventurous action. *The Babes in the Wood* has to have three stories—the Babes, Robin Hood, and Who Killed Cock Robin?, and that is altogether too much of a good thing, even for Drury Lane. But the point is not that it did happen, but why it happened, and the deduction I would suggest is that it happened because the magic-element dwindled.

Even in so short a span as the six years here studied, the change is evident. There is less attention paid to the fairy-tale, and the pantomime proper, which used to be kept till the Harlequinade, overflows into the early part. Tricks and topical allusions are no longer kept for the end; they occur all through, and so there becomes less and less need for the Harlequinade, which wilts, withers and, within my own day, vanished. The Harlequinade was a very simple form of humour. As electricity and engineering made possible increasingly elaborate effects, it was no longer likely that the simple magic of Harlequin would inspire awe. We may notice that dresses, as well as scenery, became more and more important,<sup>1</sup> and as to tricks, the Victorians were hard at it with one of their own—the pun. Though they did not know it, it derived from the Harlequinade. Instead of things not being

<sup>1</sup> “The elaborate costumes and accessories designed by Wilhelm. The dresses executed by Auguste et Cie, Miss Fisher, Rouy and Felix, Nathan,” etc.

what they seem, they are simply not what they sound. "A lad, a ladder, and Aladdin" is one cry, whilst Cinderella moans, "Even in my kitchen, I am always *ketchin'* it." The chorus of owls in the *Babes* observes that "We are much too wet to woo". One of the worst occurs when Will Scarlett (Maggie Duggan) refers to Friar Tuck's archery as "a mock priest's fête". He replies, "Quite right. A fête sham-pater." The books of words of *Beauty and the Beast*, put on at the Brighton Aquarium in 1889, and in *Dick Whittington* at Collins' Music Hall, Islington, read now like a hurdle-race of puns, and *Blue Beard* (1885) will go to apparently any length to twist the meaning of a word. "Don't be *key*-areless" he says, handing his keys to Fatima; she herself is not above mentioning a supper which will cause her to take a *supper*-ific. Her lover is Selim, which gives rise to innumerable variations on his figure being "*selim* and straight", that his foes will "*seal 'im*" in his doom until the Fairy grants "*Sel-uminations*".

The Fairy, however, no longer plays much part. The principal *danseuse* matters more. The Fairy Queen is banished below-stairs, to appear through a "trap" only when needed to spur on the story. In latter-day pantomimes, this is occasionally needed to move, mainly because the story is no longer told simply. People have lost interest in it, and with most that went with it. An early *Cinderella* might be called "an Operatic Tale of Enchantment" and one knew where one was—in the Forest of Salerno, an Apartment in the Castello, the Grand Salon de Danse, or the Fairy Retreat with Fountain. But *Beauty and the Beast* (in 1889) made no concession to prettiness greater than a Garden of Roses; the rest of the scenes were Harbour of Nowerinpertickler,

Kempton Park, A Bit of Old Brighton. *Blue Beard* began boisterously with a Demons' Smoking Concert, then went on to a Board School, The Railway Station, Margate Sands, The Very High Seas, and The After Dark Continent, to end in the Desert. None of these being, one would think, very fruitful for the imagination.

It must not be forgotten, of course, that whatever may have happened to Harlequin and Columbine, the Principal Boy was at her zenith. These were the days when "boy" was spelt with an "h" and the thighs that were slapped were sustained not on cutlets and orange juice but on steak and porter. There is less mincing delicacy, less refaned insipidity than among the stars of our own day. These Victorian principal boys and girls knew their own minds and made no bones about what they were out for—which is not to be wondered at, and may well be longed for, considering that some of them were played by Marie Lloyd and others of similar gustiness. *Waiting to Welcome Him Home*, with its last couplet of

*"I'll let him know that I have not forgot the way to tell the time,  
I'll give him a taste of this toffee-stick for the sake of Auld Lang  
Syne."*

is a song worthy of Lily Morris. Compared to our own pale figures, the flesh and blood of these previous purveyors of pantomime may seem welcome. But looking back we cannot help feeling that they are, after all, no more than human—only that, and nothing else. And that something more is wanted in pantomime.

The truth is that though the pantomimes of the late nineteenth century were more sure of themselves than are those of the twentieth (so very much on their best behaviour), they have yet come down in the world since

the days when Harlequin was the first word of their title, whatever the tale. Then, as I wrote last month, they were an expression of folk-mythology; later, they became only escape. And as the Victorians prospered, the pantomime absorbed more and more of the noisy humour and vulgar wealth of its surroundings; it reflected its era, lost its essentials, became immobilized in materialism, and for their escape, the Victorians turned elsewhere—to musical comedy, and light opera. The Pirates of Penzance replaced the Forty Thieves; where Columbine and Harlequin had once danced, the Pink Lady twirled with the Chocolate Soldier. Cinderella no longer fled on the stroke of twelve—at the turn of the century, The Merry Widow waltzed down the stairs with the Count of Luxembourg. And the Girl in the Taxi brought with her Our Miss Gibbs, who might be a Geisha, a Quaker Girl, or if need be Dollar Princess.

Their hey-day past, revue took the town. Shirley Kellogg, Ethel Levey, Delysia replaced Lily Elsie, Phyllis Dare, Gertie Millar, Gabrielle Raye. Yet we return whence we started. When war began, Drury Lane was running one of its own peculiar musical plays which are so nearly a pantomime, inasmuch as they are anything, and the old meets the new, for in the city where I write, *The Maid of the Mountains* plays while *Mother Goose* is prepared.

Pantomime may exist on a pension rather than reign, but it cannot be put down. London may have only one this year—*Aladdin* at the Coliseum—but there are five other *Aladdins* in the country, and Evelyn Laye, we are sure, will repeat past successes as the *Sleeping Beauty* wherever she plays.

## NEW POETRY

(*Death at Sea*, by Frederic Prokosch, Chatto and Windus, 6s. ;  
*Song and Idea*, by Richard Eberhart, Chatto and Windus, 6s. ;  
*Poems Old and New*, by Edith Sitwell, Faber, 2s. 6d. ; *Poets of To-morrow*, Second Selection, Hogarth Press, 6s.)

By AUDREY BEECHAM

IN *The Carnival* (1938) Mr. Prokosch concluded a long Ode at the end of the book with the following lines :

*There is a demand, and a life. And the moving voices  
Of the forsaken shall now be my forest, my legend.*

In his most recent novel *Night of the Poor* (1939), and in *Death at Sea*, it is of "the forsaken" that he writes. Among these are the self-betrayed, who have lost a purpose which they once saw and which their lives would have fulfilled, and who spend their lives escaping from the consequence. He describes soldiers freezing to death in the snow, who sought in their career of killing "Escape from the hushed and paralysed career of the plants." In a poem called "The Boulevard", fear of death—become an active obsession—forces escape even to the limits of self-destruction: and beneath the illogicality of this predicament he senses deep-rooted frustration and disillusionment. Symbols of this force lie all around, overpoweringly sad :

*Under the leafless arches  
Their bleeding faces move ;  
Those whom dissatisfaction  
Inward and dreamward drove  
Haunt me, and I can hardly  
Hear through their broken cries,  
Hear through their broken whispers  
The voice of the one I love.*

. . . . .

*Capitol after capitol  
 Re-echoes with the cries  
 Of lives never completed.  
 Victor on vanquished lies  
 And pours his howling seed  
 Deep into that dark hollow,  
 Deep into that dark ocean  
 In which all wisdom dies.*

(*Song*, p. 7.)

Other values are displaced, until a particular, personal love is all that can survive. It alone remains "in the useless city" the one, recurrent reality.

Like Auden, Mr. Prokosch is interested in the individual types of neurosis, and from them draws rapid, thumb-nail sketches. There pass through his pages, in familiar procession, the homicidal maniac, dope-addict, and suicide—even the vicar and the don. But his analysis is calmer than Auden's, truer and less sensational. He never derides his victims; his pity is stronger than his disgust:

*Since after all it is vitality only  
 That gives love meaning and to meaning power,  
 Forgive the dull, the defeated and the lonely  
 Inventing crises, slowly beginning to cower  
 As they sit in their deathly fashionable tower,  
 As they see the pony-footed ploughboy pass,  
 As they scent the awful, microscopic hour  
 Echoed in steel, reflected in the glass,  
 The tread, the threatening shadow in the jungle grass.*

(*Elegy*, p. 15.)

All these poems are tauter and harder than his earlier ones. They still show a tendency towards over-emphasis and exaggeration, resorting far too frequently to the use of such words as "tremendous", "marvellous", and "utterly". These three actually appear all in the same

poem ; but scattered through the book are "terrifying", "terribly", "awful", etc., which add nothing to what is often an already over-piled description.

*Song and Idea* is Mr. Eberhart's third book of poems. The reader will find that earlier influences of Wordsworth and Hopkins are no longer apparent ; that the influence of Whitman is being well absorbed, and that of Blake alone predominates. There will be found here for the first time, however, certain affinities with contemporary poets. There is a strong flavour of Empson in the poem called "When Doris Danced", a hint of Spender in the one beginning : "If only I could live at the pitch that is near madness" ; while "The Young Hunter", which has as its opening lines :

*Here gunned he homeward in the birdy breast ;  
Muscles full of baskets spread a picnic.*

shows a striking affinity with Dylan Thomas, although this may be due to the fact that both poets have been influenced by Hopkins.

Mr. Eberhart has already proved himself to be a poet of power and vision. One of the most interesting aspects of his work has been the description of metamorphosis, of his struggle through crisis to a further stage of development. *A Bravery of Earth* (1930) consisting of one long poem, was an account of this process ; and *Reading the Spirit* (1936) contained many poems of the same type : vivid and condensed, so that the problem seemed to contain its own solution. Compared with these, *Song and Idea* is disappointing. There is far greater obscurity in the poems as a whole as well as in individual lines and images, while the feeling behind them is difficult and even constipated. Unlike the first two, there appears to be no continuity or thread to

make it a book, rather than a miscellaneous collection. The poems are like fragments of a snake's skin which is being slowly discarded, but which in themselves give no indication of what will be revealed beneath. Mr. Eberhart's fourth book may give to this, his third, a greater significance.

These young American poets both write with vigour and pride. Both scent an inevitable approach of destruction and dissolution, and they have the distance, both of time and place, to give their expression of it courage and lucidity. Mr. Eberhart is the more sensuous perceiver :

*The birds were bursting in the bushes,  
The apple orchard drowned my senses in odour,*

while Mr. Prokosch can describe more neatly what he perceives :

*The black-snouted telephone is an emblem of pursuit,*

Their poetry appeals to the eye and brain. It does not read well aloud, nor does it seem to have outstanding qualities of assonance, rhythm, or rhyme. Perhaps greater value of this kind would emerge if the poems were read with an American accent, since Mr. Prokosch rhymes "command" with "stand", and Mr. Eberhart "queer" with "bare" and "acquire" with "liar".

*Poems Old and New* by Miss Sitwell contains most of the best and best known examples of her work. The earlier poems such as "Popular Song", "Song of a Man from a Far Country", and those from *Façade*, are constructed with faultless craftsmanship; their hard, brilliant images miraculously carried on the mellifluous, haunting music of her vowel sounds and rhythms. The second type is represented by selections from *Gold Coast*

*Customs*, "The Little Ghost who died for Love," "The Heart and the Hambone," "Extract from 'Metamorphosis'," and "Romance". These latter poems are profound and sombre, preoccupied with coldness, corruption and death, and are to many readers more satisfying in their depth and maturity. To this class may belong "Serenade: Any Man to any Woman", one of the two poems here published for the first time in book form. The other poem, "Lullaby," would seem to comprise a synthesis of the two. In it appear fantasy characters such as the Babioun and the Pterodactyl, and there is reference to "the Judas-coloured sun". But its subject is grimmer, and more gripped to the realities in which we live, than anything Miss Sitwell has written before. It is a poem of the present, written with neither fear nor hope for the future, but with a deadly honesty and directness which perhaps a few of her readers will be unable to stomach.

The second selection for the *Poets of To-morrow* series consists of verse which has appeared chiefly in Cambridge magazines or by young writers who have been associated with the University. The best known among them is Nicolas Moore, although his poems here are not up to the standard of his best work. Most promising are those by Terence Tiller, Gervase Stewart, and E. V. Swart. The rest in this book tend to be adolescent in attitude, and awkward and uncertain in manner. Sex is introduced rather self-consciously, and often it is clear that the writers do not know what they want to say from one line to the next. Apart from those mentioned, none give the impression of having yet attained the stature of poets.

# SALVAGE

(*The Search for an Office*)

By ROBERT HERRING

WE MUST LEAVE the office. True, like the windows, we have gone already. But to-day I hear that the landlord has given up his tenancy. We receive notice and must find somewhere else. It would seem stupid to take a new office in London and perhaps, just as we got settled in, be bombed out again. "Wanted—small house in country"; we join those ranks, do we? The indignity!

\* \* \*

As much to be tabooed as bomb-stories are the "Famous Last Words". To-day's was *As Safe Here As Anywhere*, when a plane seemed to take on itself the office of a hairbrush as it flew over my head in the garden. It appears it was flown by a young pilot who has been awarded the D.F.C. and dipped over the village to salute his old school. I am glad for the D.F.C., but as to the dip, you can, in Mr. Sam Goldwyn's words, "include me out."

\* \* \*

I have written nine letters "in reply to advertisements". I would only have had to write five if people would put both the rent and the number of rooms instead of only one of each. So far, places available turn out to fall into two categories; bungalows perched daintily on the cliffs of invasion coast, or mansions set in an avalanche of hair-raided acres.

\* \* \*

We shall soon hear of "epidemics" in bombed areas. Before they begin, let us remember that

in every big town, there are always "cases"; you will find always diphtheria, typhoid, somewhere, if you look. Most of us don't. This year more people are looking than usual. Many of them haven't known anything about what they now see. An "epidemic" may be caused by ignorance in more ways than one. Much as I hate anything savouring of sunshine-talk, we must have the sense to state that.

\* \* \*

Life in many of the shelters is shocking; unfortunately it was also in many of the bombed homes. To say that is not to say that one of the many shames we have brought upon ourselves in this war is that the authorities never envisaged night-bombing; even without the French aerodromes, the Germans would have bombed at night, and any time of excitement, be it day or night, increases the demand on sanitary arrangements. We can provide them for greyhound-stadiums or racecourses; where animals are the prime attraction, no arrangements are too good. For human beings—that is another story; and one that defiles our language.

\* \* \*

From London to-day I heard of another survivor from the church near home. He turned up at St. Albans. He had walked. It took him six weeks to get there. But his family had been sent to St. Albans, and it must have been the last thought in his mind as he lost consciousness when the bomb fell.

\* \* \*

I hear also from a friend who has found a house for us at Gerrard's Cross. "Safe area, easy distance of

London.' But—refugee-rent; soared up when families from Golder's Green went there.

\* \* \*

After I had written five more letters, it at last occurred to me to-day to write to agents in "localities" (house-hunting has a language, much as other huntin' has). I grow tired of this assortment of rambling rectories, castles, converted cottages, private hotels, granges, manses, and villa-ettes, masquerading in the advertisement columns as "small country house" . . . the best joke so far has been someone (regrettably, in Scotland) who would not accept rent from any refugee—they could have the cottage free; all he asked was for a bath to be put in. A bath, I think, is not so quietly put in, nor so easily done-without till it is in, as to make a cottage "desirable". I am annoyed to hand on another Scottish joke.

\* \* \*

But as usual, *The Times* runs it close. One day was advertised: "Furnished hut at bottom of private garden. 2 gns. a week. Water near." Sanitation presumably not near, or it would be also at the end of the garden. Raids increased, and a week after this there appeared, "Large van, suitable for conversion as temporary dwelling." At this rate, I shall expect to see Hampton's having a salvage sale of flying carpets.

\* \* \*

Gerrard's Cross has had a land-mine. So Golder's Green has gone back, and rents have gone down. What you might call Surprise at Defect.

\* \* \*

I grow suspicious, too, of the number of houses, of

all kinds, available in two normally much sought-after safe areas in the North-South-West-by-East. That's how it goes. You can't find a house. When you do, you at once wonder what's wrong with it or the district or both.

\* \* \*

The village was refugee-raucous to-day. You can tell at once which are the London children, and not only because they duck if a plane should fly over, which the locals haven't learnt to do yet. The Londoners have a shrillness and a sharpness about them. Their mothers, some of them a little less shrill, are as sharp, and I see, as if I have never seen them before, this dark race, as of subterranean gypsies, that has been let loose over England.

\* \* \*

The doctor's house has a notice "To Let". I arrange to go over it. There is a shelter in the garden. As I have never yet been in one, I step inside to look—and water splashes over my ankles. The house would do. I like the idea of having my office in a surgery, interviews in the consulting room. But I see that the notice is removed from the window. "Oh *yes*," says the agent, "I think someone has taken it."

\* \* \*

News from London makes me want to return. They write a new language—"the 'All Clear' went early last night, so we had four hours in bed," or "The water is on again!" I cannot visualize the life under such circumstances; but my desire to go back is really that I don't want to lose my right to be 'of', not '*from*', London. But I have no patience with those, untrained,

who stay there when they needn't, only to be added labour to rescue-squads already over-worked.

\* \* \*

One of the evacuee boys is already working at the pits. It didn't take him long to find his feet.

In the village they give free milk to the London mothers. Going to the post-office I saw them with jugs—and it came back; the jugs, and their contents, from the scorched, waterlogged church by me, at home, when I knew what they held.

\* \* \*

*November*—The October number was late; the November will be. It is a blow, really, with all else on our hands, to have the lease given up over our heads. It is just something else to see to; furniture and equipment to be stored or moved, a new address found. . . . To-day, I leave sanctuary. I have sufficient suggestions for "alternative accommodation" to make investigation worth while. That done, I can go on to London, see staff, plan and arrange.

\* \* \*

First stage is "a well-known University town". Planes fly in droves through the spires and so low, you might say they are steeplechasing. Our own (*mainly*, say I, with native suspicion), but not less noisy for that. And a bomb falls without warning, just as I enter my room. Then another. No doubt! I am back in air-warfare. My room is on the top floor; not under the roof, but a new floor added *on* to the roof since I was last here, twenty years ago. Then, we were getting over the last war.

\* \* \*

After dinner I am roused from meditations by "Hul-lo, old boy!" Knowing that this is mess-language, I turn round to find a pilot, passenger from the train, greeting me. Seeing my surprise, he says he is soon going East. This does not lessen it. He explains that he is on his last leave. "I didn't like to go home, as I've had a leave lately, and I thought it would make them think things. So I came up here, where I know lots of the boys who are training." None of them seem to be with him, so I order a drink. "No raising glasses to the R.A.F.," he says, as he picks up his own, "I get browned off about glamour." I think, 'now I am going to be told *we are just doing our job.*' He says, "It's a bit different from farming." He is twenty-three. He has made thirty flights to Berlin.

\* \* \*

London next day looks less damaged than I had supposed. I decide that must be because I am calmer than when I last saw it. Actually, one is surprised to see, not buildings down, but those that are standing. Sirens go during luncheon. "Ah, yes," they say, "we don't notice *daytime* raids." I long to point out that the damage round us was done during daytime. But I am no longer a veteran; a visitor only. . . . Till I re-enter my house. Then it does not seem that I have been away. Not a pane broken, and the heat on for the first time. Only, upstairs, the office things to remind me what happened, two months ago. But there is a farmhouse in the West to be looked at. Fallen vacant, and offered by my employer, rent free for the office. So I am not here to stay. Nor shall I stay even the night here—not by myself, with no dog; I do not

want to get back to those nights, alone in the basement again.

\* \* \*

At dusk, I set off. I have taken a single-room flat in the block where I spent the last night I was here. The sirens swirl out . . . yes, our Northern ones are more sturdy ; no less resonant, they do not whine, do not moan, can even reassure. " We're warning you," say the Northern sirens ; these, " Look out, they're here again, *phew !* "

\* \* \*

M. and I have not finished dinner before they go again. We look at each other. It cannot be true—All Clear at 9 ? " Never yet," M. says. But—it is true. " Supper," I say, " we can go out." The old habit reasserts itself ; there has been a raid, damage and casualties there must have been—but we have not been hurt, we are alive ; and released. " To go out ! " says M., " I have not ' gone out ' for three months ! " She is débutante in her delight at a dress, not just " clothes for the crypt ", and I am a journalist again, anxious to see how London lives.

\* \* \*

They make great business about " supping in shelter ", but we who know the place know that, however much we go downstairs from one entrance, we are still above street-level on the other, reinforced as it may be. Still, if it helps anyone to have us play that game, we will play. The rest is as usual. Only miners' lamps hung from the chandeliers and closing at midnight make us feel difference. A sparkling night, the moon vast and bright in the sky—and all clear ! Suddenly across the sky,

a streak flashes. We look. Not a flare, not a shell. A shooting star. . . . To stare at the sky, and see light and know it not baleful, is an experience not yet expected.

\* \* \*

"I am sorry to trouble you," says a policeman, opening the taxi-door, "but if you'll skirt a little to the right, you will find the going is better." We agree not to mind, and observe, as we skirt, a large crater. Slight obstruction, as the policeman might have said, interfering with traffic conditions. . . This is a new kind of hold-up; a bright moonlit night, a dark mass in the road, and, by it, a helmeted policeman attentive at opening car-doors, whilst apologizing for the disturbance. One word more and we would have descended and danced a highway gavotte; such manners must be met on their own ground—though perhaps not, if that ground is a crater.

\* \* \*

The thought is broken by a dip, a plunge. Water sprays in through the window. It is momentarily like the chute at Earl's Court. We exchange glances. The driver says over his shoulder, "Seems like a bit of a bomb there." We nod. We say gravely, "Slight modification of road-surface."

\* \* \*

But it was at another's expense that we got off last night. Whilst London was clear, Coventry had it. I think most of London would rather it had been them again. It helps very few, being bombed; but London is used to it, always expected it and—was bombed in the last war. . . . I notice to-day the same feeling of

helpless sorrow as when the *Titanic* went down. A gloom that others have been called to go through it, and "it's worse for them than for us", say the London people, who for weeks perhaps haven't slept in their beds nor even in their homes.

\* \* \*

Sloane Square station was hit over-night. It was new. It has had one of those hits which slice it down. It has fallen below, underground; unfortunately, there was a train there at the time. "But not as many in it," says my informant, "as if it had been during the day." Thus we count what it seems ironical to call mercies, small as they be.

\* \* \*

A phone message comes that the Cornish farm has been bombed. It seems, therefore, scarcely indicated as a suitable residence. That rules out, also, several other "properties" near by. I need not make the journey, which is, on the whole, a relief, trains and railway-catering being what they now are. I ring up Wales. But the house there turns out to have a National Trust staircase; I don't feel like taking that on. In the papers, I notice that, to-day, other houses are advertised in the same district. The Cornish bombs have proved my hunch right; where there is room, there's a reason. I'd have liked to have gone to Wales, all the same.

\* \* \*

The best thing to do is to pack, return, and go after the one house in the village alleged to be "likely". I have been lucky so far; five bombs within fifty yards' radius of my house, and nothing touched. I shall not mind so much its being hit if there is no one going in to

look after it. If hit it must be, I would take pains not to have, as well as crushed walls, the inside made match-wood. To-day I make ready to move.

\* \* \*

Going to buy an extra suitcase, I notice in Harrods white plaster bulldogs, tin-hatted, on flags. So we have got to that stage ! I should have expected them more at Selfridges first.

\* \* \*

The sirens are punctual, but B. and A. are late for lunch. That gives me time to buy a few more things round the corner. The All Clear goes as I return, having forgotten the raid. I am glad to find how quickly one resumes normal habits. I do not think it a good thing to live in this way, but I am glad to find I still can. Later, in the afternoon, a raid comes while I am at home. A plane drones above, as in the old days. "They haven't done that for a long time," says Mrs. Payne. But it is not so bad. It is simply foolish and interrupting and (even in not-noticing it) a diversion of energy from better uses. It will be good when she, and everyone else I know that can be, is got out. Those who stay are pleased with any fragment of activity they can achieve ; they have forgotten what a full day is like, now that their day is shortened and their night made so much longer, being loud.

\* \* \*

L. pays a visit, between shifts on her mobile canteen. It feeds not only East Enders, but firemen, rescue squads. We might have thought that fires would have been envisaged, and that the men fighting them would have to be fed. But that is not so. The men

may be given odd half-hour shifts off to get food, but often there is nowhere in the district where they are; their own canteens are insufficient. They depend, as much as they dare, on volunteer work.

Yes, because plans were badly made, were made late, or were not made at all, people help those who were hurt or hit; other services have to spring up to help the helpers. Then, to help those who are helping the helpers . . . much effort is wasted.

\* \* \*

It is an ironical reflection that we had prepared for a far greater death-roll from raids; when the expected amount were not killed, we were unready. It is almost as if one were to say, "I am sorry, we have nowhere for you to go; you see, we thought you'd be dead."

\* \* \*

I accompany L. back and am surprised to see labels fluttering from the knockers of houses in the square where she lives. "Oh yes," she explains, "if we put how many are inside each house, it's easier when we need digging out." Paper and thread, then, will withstand what bricks and bone won't? She erases her name, as she will be on duty to-night with her van, urn, and jam-puffs.

\* \* \*

On the way back, I detour to our biggest crater. The biggest in London. This is discipline. More of London's left than I'd thought, life is less disturbed than it was (or has settled down to being disturbed). King's Road looks intact. A few yards off it, is—the worst thing I have seen. A crater you imagine as a hole in the ground. But there was no ground here, none visible,

none to spare. Only houses, blocks and blocks ; the bomb had to tear through to get to the ground ; it did ; it was the largest London's had. . . .

I have made my eyes look at it, and they hate me, that I made them.

\* \* \*

Many of the results of the bombings I knew have been repaired. Main roads first. In the side streets, there are still heaps of rubble where had been a house. I pass a roofless room where I once went to a party. Of other bared homes, I can only guess the inhabitants. A street of continuing houses, then a gap, burnt-out rooms, wreckage, and silence. Nothing said ; but one feels an invisible notice : " Gone Away." If one asked—" Yes, they were here," it would be, " I don't know . . ." and a look, *don't ask me more*.

\* \* \*

The " All Clear " failed us to-night. We went out, for air, after dinner. Down to the river, we said. But tinkling glass fell too near, and the drone became personally aimed. Retiring, " we will wait," we remarked, " for the lull."

No lull comes. It is stuffy downstairs and too soon to sleep ; we sit on the stairs—as if at a hunt-ball. I notice a new régime has set in ; the people in the flats no longer dress for dinner ; they dine early, and dress after—for the night. Turbans, trousers, fur-coats, according to desires now released for dressing-up or dressing-down. The elder create an impression of gallantly sitting through an interminable New Year's Eve ; the younger look as if they are embarking for a holiday on the Norfolk Broads. Lights-out at eleven-

thirty ; but chair-concern or the need to stake space for a mattress, causes most people to be in place earlier. Just as all have, according to their nature, curled themselves up or spread themselves out, the bar shuts, at eleven. The bar is a trolley, and closing consists of the attendant clattering together the bottles on top as she picks them up, to fling them in the cupboard beneath. Once there, they fall in conflict with the glasses ; to prevent them tumbling out, she has to crash the cupboard doors with a bang that wakes everyone up. It happens every night, but they still wake up. They remember that the girl has been bombed out of a hotel-bar, and compose themselves again.

\* \* \*

I watch, amused at the changes in friendships and formalities since last I was here. M. says, "There is small point in settling for sleep yet, it seems a noisy night." I say I had been afraid I should find the quiet of the country had removed my nerve (if I had any) ; I am delighted it has not ; I go on in the same way, now I am back. I say I am glad to find everyone else does ; with few exceptions, there is not the strident cheerfulness which is almost as wearing as panic (the exceptions are mainly those whose private lives were out of order and have been caught by this war on the hop). At the same time, I think we go on chiefly out of habit—as we smoke out of habit, swear out of habit, cook and—even more strikingly make ourselves eat what we cook—out of habit. What makes us dogged is also what makes us dull ; habit. Now that we can be as dull as we like, make no effort about it, many of us have a new lease of life.

\* \* \*

A writer comes up to talk about the City of the Future. My surprise that anyone still goes in for such juvenalia is mistaken as interest, and I am let in for the whole bag of tricks. The worst of it is, he uses all the phrases I have declared against in the November news-reel; the number's already at press but he may think I have been stung to it by him. I would not so flatter.

The City of the Future is chucked for a city of the past, Rome. I become unpopular because my enthusiasm isn't fired at the suggestion that Rome should be burnt. This is a weak spot in my character; if 400 are killed in London I feel hardly compensated if 400 die anywhere else. Evidently, I must take myself in hand about this. I still feel sure that what people who've been bombed really want is to prevent the enemy from being able to kill us, not merely to kill them.

\* \* \*

Fresh air needed after this. But the building shakes as we peer into the night. No doubt that it is a heavy raid as raids go. The trouble is that this doesn't; it stays. I return to the lounge, and sleep in an armchair, fitfully, as in a train far too slow and not sure. Bombs, bangs, guns rumbling up the street and occasionally the flats rock in protest. At six, I give up, and climb to my room for a bath. When it is light enough to draw curtains, I find the sky bleeding orange. Fires again. I mount to the roof. Once again, the day I leave London, flames licking thickly. As I travel to my house, more damage than I have seen. I am early, and the West End's not yet swept up. Houses flung in the street, like a parcel a giant has dropped. At home, I find H.,

who last night had a land-mine in their street ; it has brought back the church again. It seems a good thing plans are made, instructions given, and that I am taking with me various adjuncts I had not room for before.

\* \* \*

The station is glassless. To the landmine a few weeks ago were added last night two direct hits. I wait, in damp fog, on the open platform, in a crowd of people who, for the most part, would have done far better, and had been begged, to leave long ago. Now they are laden, heavy-lidded, lugging children, dogs, and even more refractory prams. Rained on, sodden, stupefied, but still stubborn, they wait, not only for the train, but for the raid that usually comes around lunch-time. It doesn't ; but the train does, not very late.

\* \* \*

With each mile, relaxation grows deeper. At Derby, a couple get in ; the old wartime tradition, two brass stars and one diamond brooch. " O, look ! " she says, over minxed furs, "*balloons* !" And this marks a new frontier. We can no longer go abroad. But our own country divides now into zones, areas (safety, reception or bombed). In each, one finds a new kind of life. Here a resort almost taken over by military, there a city busier than since the slump. By the novelty the balloons were to this girl, one knows one has changed zones.

\* \* \*

Yet the time may come when here, as elsewhere, death descends in a night. The little houses the train now travels past may one day be riddled, rent, and made gaping mockeries for mankind. It does not take long

for there to be charred windows, curtains fluttering rags, a bed overturned with a wardrobe atop and among it a woman, whose man has joined up, sweeping glass, hanging-on out of habit while others go by, with those poor cheap-jack-sold suitcases, trekking out before dusk.

We cannot tell those who do not know this yet, for they can do nothing against it. They must wait till it comes. That's the horror. So, not knowing, they pretend, pluck up courage, and are cheerful ; till the time comes for many of them to find that many of them are not there when it is their turn to make that trek before dusk. But do not forget, as the train forges ahead, that in every town it can happen.

\* \* \*

*December.* I go over the house in the village. Rooms, rent, all are suitable. The owners cannot leave till the New Year. I would have liked to have been established by Christmas. But now I would get in nowhere by then. It is better to be sure of somewhere in the New Year than to spend the rest of this looking and losing other places.

\* \* \*

When I go walking, the streams are in spate, and down the dales and through the hilly sides of the woods waterfalls run. I have not seen so many since Wales. The air, too, has mountain-keenness ; from the Peak, I am told, and the water lacing the woods comes from there, snow-water, it looks, by the colour.

\* \* \*

That raid, I now read, was the worst London had

had. The hotel we had supped at was hit, one of several.

\* \* \*

The vans arrive. At least everything's under one roof. Even though not my own yet. And there—to-night, the effrontery of a warning! The first all-night since I have been here. I drop off to sleep, and the All Clear does not go until four. A Merseyside town was the target.

\* \* \*

To-night, again. As I bent to poke the fire, a well-known drone down the chimney, which acts as loud-speaker. At seven that is, and it goes on all night. One plane seems to go over and over, to go over, over and over again; we know now that means they are coming in waves. By thuds, we know the objective, and as the guns bark, we know there is no longer any question of not letting them know where they are. It will be a sad town in the morning. And yet, knowing each thud may mean creatures moaning in pain, one goes to bed.

\* \* \*

When I go out next day, there is a notice on the gates. As I turn to read it, a policeman comes up. "Unexploded bomb," he says. "You should not have come through." In view of the nature of what Mrs. Payne calls "the relic", I suggest he should not keep me talking.

\* \* \*

In the village rumour romps. Some who work in the city had only just got back. There is a

plane brought down, blocking the road, you can't get in—yet the buses are running! So-and-so's is down; yet I find it still stands. I think it goes like this; someone says a shop's windows have gone; this becomes all that is in the shop—windows has gone; soon the shop itself has gone. All that is down, I find, at So-and-So's is the shutters, as they should be; to-day, wisely, they have not been drawn up, that is all.

\* \* \*

There was some doubt that a bus will go. But it does. The passengers cry "Ooh" each time that we pass houses ruined; they have not seen devastation before. But when we get in, I see more than I ever have done. This corner's down, that building gutted . . . *you won't see so-and-so in that shop any more nor get anything here any more . . .* but there is no need to describe. It is what happens to us to-day, and it has happened here badly.

\* \* \*

Streets are loose-mosaiced with glass. The water running down from the fires makes further slipperiness. Soon it will freeze. The cold already bites. I am scarcely in the town before I realize it will be hard to get out; the trek has begun. The streets are thick with people leaving before nightfall. Once again the bedding, the bundles. Once again dusty hair, smoke-grimed faces, the dazed look of those who've been bombed. But this difference; in London, unless you go to the East End, you don't see the very poor. Here they are all round you, torn between desire to get out before dusk and fascination at the damage done to *them* overnight. They mill round me, in shawls, with children. And at a street corner, with no buildings round

her, a flower-seller sits with white mop chrysanthemums as if nothing had happened.

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I abandon the idea of a bus back. I will take a taxi. The old excuse for extravagance, that I am taking the seat of someone poorer, has a twist to it; in a taxi, I can give lifts. But one station is closed, there are no taxis at the other. Dusk deepens. Back at the bus stop, I find there is no bus for two hours.

It will seem peculiar to have come through London, to be trapped in Sheffield. I will not wait for the bus. I will walk or hitch-hike my way back to the village, where home and office is now. It should not take more than two hours. Frost smears the roads into slides. It is dark, but we shall get lifts. . . . I join the others, trekking out, carrying in shawls and suitcases their salvage.

## THREE POEMS

### STREET SONG

“ LOVE MY HEART for an hour, but my bone for a day—  
At least the skeleton smiles, for it has a morrow :  
But the hearts of the young are now the dark treasure  
    of Death,  
And summer is lonely.

Comfort the lonely light and the sun in its sorrow,  
Come like the night, for terrible is the sun  
As truth, and the dying light shows only the skeleton's  
    hunger  
For peace, under the flesh like the summer rose.

Come through the darkness of death, as once through  
    the branches  
Of youth you came, through the shade like the flowering  
    door  
That leads into Paradise, far from the street,—you, the  
    unborn  
City seen by the homeless, the night of the poor !

You walk in the city ways, where Man's threatening  
    shadow  
Red-edged from the sun like Cain, has a changing  
    shape,—  
Elegant like the Skeleton, crouched like the Tiger,  
With the age-old wisdom and aptness of the Ape.

The pulse that beats in the heart is changed to the  
    hammer

That sounds in the Potter's Field where they build a  
 new world  
 From our Bone, and the carrion-bird days' foul  
 droppings and clamour—  
 But you are my night, and my peace,—

The holy night of conception, of rest, the consoling  
 Darkness when all men are equal,—the wrong and the  
 right,  
 And the rich and the poor are no longer separate  
 nations,—  
 They are brothers in night.”

This was the song I heard; but the Bone is silent:  
 Who knows if the sound was that of the dead light  
 calling,—  
 Of Cæsar rolling onward his heart, that stone,  
 Or the burden of Atlas falling.

EDITH SITWELL

## THE YOUTH WITH THE RED-GOLD HAIR

*(“ Did ghosts from those thickets walk about your land  
 So the tent of the shepherdess was cumbered with gold  
 armour  
 Till the hero left your mother and turned back into the  
 glade,  
 Bright as his armour ? ”*

SACHEVERELL SITWELL)

THE GOLD-ARMOURED GHOST from the Roman road  
 Sighed over the wheat

"Fear not the sound and the glamour  
 Of my gold armour—  
 (The sound of the wind and the wheat)  
 Fear not its clamour . . .  
 Fear only the red-gold sun with the fleece of a fox  
 Who will steal the fluttering bird you hide in your  
     breast.  
 Fear only the red-gold rain  
 That will dim your brightness, O my tall tower of the  
     corn,  
 You,—my blond girl . . ."  
 But the wind sighed "Rest" . . .  
 The wind in his grey knights' armour  
 The wind in his grey night armour  
 Sighed over the fields of the wheat "He is gone . . .  
     Forlorn. . . ."

EDITH SITWELL

## RAGGED SERENADE:

### BEGGAR TO SHADOW

(" *Je m'en allais les poings dans mes poches crevées.  
 Mon paletot aussi devenait idéal.  
 J'allais sous le ciel, Muse, et j'étais ton féal :  
 Oh là là, que d'amours splendides j'ai rêvées !* ")

THESE ARE THE nations of the Dead, their million-  
     year-old  
 Rags about them,—these, the eternally cold—  
 Misery's worlds, with Hunger, their long sun  
 Shut in by polar wastes of ice, known to no other,  
 Without a name, without a brother,  
 Though their skin shows that they yet are men,

Airing their skeletons' well-planned cities where,  
Left by the rose, the flesh, with truth alone,  
The fevers of the world and of the heart,  
And all but hunger, thirst, and lust,  
The light of the sun, are gone.

And to their only friend, the Shade  
They cast, their muttering voices sing this serenade :

“ Oh Shade ! Gigantic and adaptable Ape,  
With the elegance of the skeleton  
In your black tattered cape—  
How like, and yet how unlike, you are to our last  
state !

You, too, have giant hands,—but have no thumbs  
In a world where nothing is to make or hold,  
Nor have you that appalling gulf the heart,  
Or that red gulf the gullet where only Hunger comes.

For face, you have a hollow wolf-grey cowl  
Like mine . . . no voice to howl—

(O plain of winter wolves beneath my heart !)  
And no identity ! No face to weep !  
No bed,—unlike the rich men who can creep  
Into the pocks made by that vast disease  
That is our civilization,—once there, lie at ease !

No memory, no years,  
Nothing to feel or think,  
No friend from whom to part with youthful tears.  
But your unutterable tatters cannot stink !

My overcoat, like yours, is an Ideal,  
With a gulf for pockets—nothing there to steal  
But empty hands that long have lost their use,  
With nothing now to make, or hold, or lose.

But when spring comes, a world is in my head,  
And dreams, for those who never have a bed,—

The thought of a day when all may be possible,—all  
May come my way," said small Rag-Castle to Rag-  
Castle tall—

The young, that have no covering between  
Their outer tatters and the worthless skin—  
Showing the air, the rain, they yet are men,

When remembering it is spring, falls the warm rain  
Like lilies of the vale,  
Buds golden-pale  
Sprouting from pavements, or a universe of coins,  
endless gold

Pelting the homeless, those that have no dress  
Against the winter cold,  
But the skeleton, that burg of idleness  
Where only the worm works, . . . those that are alone  
Except for hunger, thirst and lust;  
For the fevers of the world and of the heart,  
The summer rose, are gone.

EDITH SITWELL

# BACKGREEN CONCERT

By FRED URQUHART

MRS. LOGAN TREADLED with determination. "I'll see that Phyllis knocks spots off thae other bairns," she said to Mrs. Stout, her friend from the bottom flat, who was sitting on the edge of the table. "She's goin' to be the star o' this concert or I'll know the reason why!" She punched in the last few stitches and pulled out the frock, holding it up and shaking it with a flourish: a pale blue flag of mother's pride.

"It's gorgeous," Mrs. Stout said, pitching her cigarette-end into the fire before she fingered the dress. "Phyllis'll look gorgeous in it."

"I'd like to see that Mrs. Benzies's face when she sees it," Mrs. Logan said. "Her bandy-legged brat'll no' have a look in."

Mrs. Stout sighed. "I wish it was for a brat o' mine. Jock was just sayin' last night that he wished we had a bairn in the concert."

"Ach, there's time enough yet," Mrs. Logan said. "Ye've only been married five years. Ye'll just have to keep hopin'. And mind the motto: Try, try, try again!"

"It would be fine if the Goldengreen Street concert was better than ony o' the other Calderburn ones," Mrs. Stout said. "I see in the *News* last night that Calderburn Crescent had sent fifty-five shillings to the Red Cross fund."

"Ach, we'll make mair than that," Mrs. Logan said. "That was just a flea-bite."

"I made a lot o' tablet," Mrs. Stout said. "I thought

I'd ha'e to do somethin' seein' that I hadnie ony bairns o' ma ain in it. Cissie McIntosh said she'd sell it at the concert. It should maybe rake in some money."

"I hear that wife Benzies gave a basket o' groceries for the bairns to raffle," said Mrs. Logan, spreading an ironing-blanket on the table. "She should raffle hersel' when she's at it. Though she wouldnie bring in much wi' yon horse's face!"

"I was speakin' to her last night when she was doin' the passage," Mrs. Stout said, putting the cover on the sewing-machine and gathering up the clippings of blue silk. "She tells me that her and Mrs. Rafferty are goin' to do a dance at the concert."

"What!" cried Mrs. Logan. "I thought it was just to be the bairns."

"Well, that's what she told me."

"Huh, they'll be a couple o' bonnie dearies, and I never saw them," Mrs. Logan said. "Honest to God, I never heard the like o' it. Twa big women goin' to dance in a kids' concert."

"Maybe Rafferty's tryin' to make up for that laddie o' hers. He's no' to be in it, is he?"

"I should think not! He's that daft that he couldnie be trusted to do the right thing at the right time. Honest to God," Mrs. Logan said, "I never saw such a daft bairn. He goes on like a mad one, aye playin' cowboys and Indians and pretendin' he's shootin' folk. Shootin' himsel' and lyin' doon in the middle o' the street for 'oors. He'll get a bonnie fright one o' thae days if a motor gangs ower him."

"It's a pity a motor wouldnie gang ower his mother. That woman causes more rows in this street than onybody else." Mrs. Stout leaned forward, her eyes

big with spite. "Did ye hear about her throwin' a pail o' water ower Mrs. Moore?"

"Ay, I heard." Mrs. Logan began to iron the frock, smoothing out the frills with great care. "She had a right neck. Mrs. Moore just said what was the truth, about Rafferty havin' a bairn by some engine-driver before she married Rafferty."

"Really!" Mrs. Stout exclaimed. "A woman like that has a right cheek to dance for the Red Cross."

"Well, we'll see," Mrs. Logan said, smiling as the iron slid smoothly over the silk. "We'll just wait and see."

The concert was held on the drying-green between two tenements. Almost everybody in the street had loaned chairs or seats of some description, and these were arranged in a semi-circle around a stage composed of tables and boards. Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Stout were early, and Mrs. Logan said: "We'll be able to bag good seats!"

"I'll have this auld easy-chair," said Mrs. Stout. "Here, shift that yin beside it."

"The grand stand!" Mrs. Logan laughed as she pulled the two big chairs together. "Now, we're all set!"

Apparently some people were not going to come down and sit in the improvised theatre; they leaned out of their windows. "Hey, you up there in the gallery," Mrs. Logan called to one stout woman whose bosom was overhanging her elbows "Mind and gi'e the man at the door yer tickets!"

"Tryin' to get a free show," she muttered to her friend. "Although there's to be a collection, just catch the like o' her throwin' oot ony money. She's a right skinflint."

"Who's that?" Mrs. Stout asked, nodding at some

women who were taking their seats. "That one wi' the red tammy."

"Oh, that's wee pug-nose that the bomb fell on," Mrs. Logan said, waving to some people who were arranging themselves at a top-storey window. "Ye ken—Mrs. something or other—Flockart—frae Calderburn Gardens. Ye mind, the incendiary bomb fell on her hoose last week."

"I hope there'll no' be an air-raid while the concert's on," said Mrs. Stout.

"Oh well, if there is we're fine and near the shelters." Mrs. Logan nodded to the seats arranged on top of the Anderson shelters. "We'll just ha'e to make a dive into auld Nicholson's dug-out."

"No' me, I'm no' goin' into it." Mrs. Stout sniffed and shook back her short permanently-waved hair. "He wasnie very pleasant to the McIntoshes when they went into his shelter in the raid last Thursday because their own was flooded."

"Ach, he's a right auld nark. Did ye ever see the like o' that?" Mrs. Logan nodded at the fence that Mr. Nicholson had put up around his vegetables. "Fancy puttin' big palin' stabs like that. Ye'd think it was for keepin' an elephant in!"

"Maybe it's for his auld woman!" Mrs. Stout giggled. "She looks as though she should be shut up."

"It's strong enough to keep twa ponies in, onyway." Mrs. Logan leaned past her and said; "How are ye the night, Mrs. Moore? Have ye got ower the fright ye got the other night?"

"Ay, I'm fine." Fat Mrs. Moore lowered herself into the chair next to Mrs. Stout. "I hear that Her Nabs is goin' to do a dance."

"Ay. Have ye brought a pail o' water wi' ye?"

"No, but it would be a grand chance!" Mrs. Moore's fat shoulders shook with laughter.

A little girl selling tablet squeezed her way towards them. "How're ye gettin' on, Cissie?" asked Mrs. Stout. "Is it sellin' all right?"

"Uhuh. I've sellt mair than half o' it already."

"That's fine." Mrs. Stout took out her purse. "We'll take a couple o' bars to help ye on."

She handed one of the bars to Mrs. Logan. "It tastes no' bad though I say it masel'." She was leaning back with satisfaction, nibbling the tablet, when Mrs. Logan nudged her and said: "There's yer man ower there. He looks as though he's wantin' ye."

A youngish man with a bald head and shaving-soap on his face was leaning on a fence, trying to attract Mrs. Stout's attention. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and his shirt was tucked down below his breast so that the hair on his chest could be seen. "What do ye want, Jock?" his wife cried.

He waved to her to come to him. She opened her mouth wide with exasperation and began to scramble through the chairs, apologizing to the people she disturbed. Mrs. Moore winked at Mrs. Logan. "Thae young ones!" she said. "Their wives cannie get the length o' the lavyies wi'oot them followin'!"

"I never thought he was such a queer lookin' jeeger," a woman said. "I've never seen him wi'oot his hat afore. He's just like a bald skatin' rink."

"His breast was bare, his matted hair!" Mrs. Moore laughed. "As ma man that's aye spoutin' poetry would say!"

“ Wheesht ! ” a woman cried. “ The concert’s goin’ to start ! ”

A young woman with a piano-accordion at the side began to play a popular tune, and all the little girls of the street filed on to the improvised stage, giggling self-consciously and pushing each other. One or two of them tried to do the step they had been taught, but most of them were so busy looking for their mothers and friends that they could do nothing. Mrs. Logan twiddled her thumbs and tucked in her chin with pride. Although she said it herself, Phyllis was far and away the best dressed and the neatest of the bunch. Just look at that bairn, Maisie Benzies, now ! Her mother’s frizzed out the poor bairn’s hair until it looks like a heather-besom. “ Did ye ever see the like o’ it ? ” she whispered to Mrs. Stout, who had pushed her way back to her seat, her face scarlet with embarrassment. “ It’s just like something that comes out a Ewbank ! ”

“ Do ye ken what Jock wanted ? ” Mrs. Stout murmured.

Mrs. Logan gave her a dunch. “ Be quiet the now. Phyllis is goin’ to dance.”

Phyllis, gripping the frills of her frock with both hands, her little fingers sticking out with priggish elegance, had minced to the front of the stage. She bowed left and right, and nodded to the girl with the accordion.

Mrs. Logan sat back and watched every step, nodding her head every now and then in time with her daughter’s feet. “ There now,” she muttered. “ One, two, one, two, turn. . . . ”

She simpered and ostentatiously folded her arms when the crowd applauded at the end of her daughter’s dance.

"She was gorgeous," said Mrs. Stout, and when Mrs. Moore leaned over and said: "I couldn't ha'e done better masel'!" Mrs. Logan smiled with satisfaction.

The next turn was Mrs. Benzies and Mrs. Rafferty. They shook their fists and roared remarks to the audience when they came on. Mrs. Rafferty had on her husband's sailor clothes, his hat tilted to the side of her dark curly hair, and she wore a pair of high-heeled red quilted satin bedroom slippers. Mrs. Benzies had on a frilly ballet-dress, which she flirted up every little while, showing her lace-trimmed yellow cami-knickers. The audience hooted and applauded its approval of this comic by-play.

"There's Rafferty himsel'," Mrs. Logan said, jerking her head to the crowd standing on the outskirts. "He's got on his civvies. By God, he'd get a fright if a captain or somebody off his boat came and found his wife wearin' his navy clothes!"

"They're a pair o' comics, aren't they?" the woman next to Mrs. Logan said, clapping her hands loudly and laughing when the two women had finished their dance.

"I daresay it pleases some folk," Mrs. Logan replied, giving her palms one or two feeble claps together. "But it's no' to everybody's taste."

But it was to the audience's taste if it wasn't to Mrs. Logan's; they demanded an encore. Mrs. Rafferty came to the front and bawled: "We're ower winded to dance again the noo, but we'll ha'e a song. Come on, noo! *Roll Out the Barrel!* We'll roll it right ower auld Hitler's belly!"

There were shrieks of laughter and when the accordion struck up the tune they shouted the words of the song lustily. But Mrs. Logan sat through it with a disapproving

face. This was a concert that the bairns had arranged, and she didn't see why those two besoms should have come and stuck their noses into it, even though Mrs. Starke and the rest thought they were so comic. If they were so keen, they could do their bit in other ways and leave the bairns alone to do theirs.

Mrs. Rafferty and Mrs. Benzies danced again towards the end of the concert, and again they led the crowd in community singing. Mrs. Logan was so furious that she could not join in singing her favourite song : *I have not got my specs with me*. But she brightened a little when Phyllis did another dance, and when the concert finished she said good-night amicably enough to the others. After all, she thought, Phyllis was easy the star among the bairns. That brat o' Benzies' was just a mess.

It was beginning to get dark ; the tenements were standing like stiff cardboard boxes against a beryl sky, which was striped with thin flame-coloured clouds. Wispy slate-blue clouds were puffing upwards in the light of the fading sun. A crowd of men and boys were taking down the improvised stage and carrying chairs back to their owners. Mrs. Logan looked at the sky. " Let's hope there's no raids the night," she said as they went into the entry and began to climb the stairs. She put her arm proudly and protectingly around her daughter's shoulders. " Ye knocked spots off everybody there, Phyllis. Though it's masel' that says it ! "

# ORA PRO BOSCS

By GWYN JONES

FOR SIR RHODRI PLÂS MAWR it was the best of Friday mornings. Not because the sun was shining and the wind blowing, not because Bessi the Blaen had the evening before littered four healthy puppies, not even because he owned all he saw. He caressed his vast nose and said "Ah!" He was happy and excited both, like a dog rolling on a dead mouse. It was court day.

He'd show 'em! By jumping george, he'd show 'em! Lot of thieves picking over his land, huh. The rabbits they'd got away with would load a gambo, and the birds—his face lost its smile—his lovely birds—it was worse than murder. His lovely shiny-breasted birds tied up in sacks, and all to pack a poacher's belly. "Worse than murder!" he grunted.

"Yessir," said the maid, clearing his breakfast tray.

His mouth opened, but he shut it again without a word. In the shadow of Sir Rhodri's nose it looked like a lead mine under Snowdon. Not that the nose was uncomely. For a man twice his size it would be perfection. It had line and rhythm and character, and when he blew it it had tone. And though ashamed of it as a lad, as a man he was not dissatisfied. It marked him out in a crowd, gave folk something to remember him by, and he thought it patrician. Not a collier's nose, he used to tell himself, and others; not a grocer's nose, and they didn't grow that way on dustmen or duns. A virile organ, he had been assured.

"Well?" he asked the girl.

"Mr. Bevan is downstairs to see you, sir."

"Couldn't you say so at once? Tell him fifteen minutes." He wanted a word with Bevan. Right enough to point out that his place on the bench was best left empty—after all, he hadn't sat a dozen times in as many years, just now and again when for the look of the thing he paid a visit to Plâs Mawr—and justice was justice, neither for rent nor rape, quite right. But Bevan's hints that he'd better stay away altogether—He blew his nose, hard, and those below remembered the Last Trump.

"Morning, Bevan."

"Morning, Sir Rhodri." A poor little squirt of a fellow, Bevan, no more to him than a row of spring cabbage.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Lovely morning, Bevan. And a great occasion."

"As you say, Sir Rhodri."

"I hope the Bench will make this a lesson to the whole neighbourhood. This—what's the chap's name?"

"Thomas Thomas."

"Thomas Thomas—ah!"

"They call him Tomos Tynypwll round here," said Bevan. "I doubt if there's many know his right name. And some call him Tom Bugle."

"Musical, is he? A real taffy, eh?" And Sir Rhodri recited:

"Tomos was a Welshman, Tomos was a thief,  
Tomos came to my house and stole better than a leg of beef,  
blast him!"

He laughed and rubbed his hands together. "Well, so long as they get it right on the charge sheet, eh?—Thomas Thomas or Tomos Tynypwll, no odds.

He needs a lesson, Bevan, and all these pinchers and poachers. We must be firm with this bugler who bugles my birds."

He was disappointed that the agent, usually so sharp, missed his joke. "We'll be that all right. We'd better not show too fierce, though. Just let the law take its course, Sir Rhodri."

"Who said anything else? Justice, that's what we want. That's what we'll get." Sir Rhodri warmed up. "If I was a vindictive sort of chap I'd be sitting on the bench this morning, not among the public. But I've always been a man to uphold the constitution and appearances. In my position, Bevan, I must set an example. These labour chaps, you know—."

Bevan agreed this was very handsome of Sir Rhodri. "And since you feel that way about it, Sir Rhodri, I really believe it might be better—"

"Well?"

"To be frank, Sir Rhodri, that if you decided to stay away even from the body of the court—"

Sir Rhodri shook his nose, and the rest of his head swung with it. "Nonsense, Bevan! Damned nonsense! My rabbits, aren't they? And my birds. Wara teg, Bevan: fair play's a jewel, as they say. If I haven't a right to be present, who the devil has?"

Bevan admitted his right. "But I still think it might be better. I wish you would, Sir Rhodri."

"Now look here, Bevan—" Sir Rhodri grew red and hot, like a hollow radish. "I don't know what's going on behind my back with some of you." He waved Bevan's mouth shut. "First there's you, pretending to save me trouble; then there's that fat-lugged sergeant telling me I needn't bother to be present; then there's

old Powey; and now there's you again. I'm a patient man, but I'm getting angry. Know the word, Bevan? Angry—See!”

Bevan saw and said he saw, but that didn't save him now. Sir Rhodri rolled him out like a dollop of dough, north-south and east by west, and when at last he thumped him back to shape it was only to a rough likeness. “*See, Bevan?*”

“I can only say I acted for the best.”

“All right then.”

“And I think you'll be sorry, Sir Rhodri.”

“You'll be sorry unless you shut up,” said Sir Rhodri, shoving his snout forward.

Yet the thought stuck with him as he drove the two of them a mile and a half to town. Sorry, indeed. Tomos Tynypwll might be sorry and anyone else he gave the rough end of his tongue to, but he, Sir Rhodri, the big shot around here—why, he owned the place. He'd show 'em!

Yet when he met the local justices behind the courtroom they lacked hwyl. No question of it, they were sick as dogs to see him. Not even sherry brought them together—Bristol Milk at fourteen bob a bottle. And it was galling the way they stared at his nose when they thought he wasn't looking. It wasn't as though they'd never set eyes on it before. And that chap Bevan—the look on his face. Pious. Smug. Bit of a martyr. Sir Rhodri was becoming most uncomfortable. Perhaps they thought he meant to bully them, give justice a squeeze, like an orange, like a—chrrm! Like a parlour-maid, he was going to say, but that was levity. He sought to cleanse their hearts of doubt. He cared less than a tick's elbow for the rabbits, he assured them,

never touched the things, no fat on their ribs, but a principle was at stake. Property. Ah, property ! Where should we be without it ?

Where would you be without it ? thought the magistrates, for a moment forgetting his nose.

Time to get a move on, thank heaven ! Sir Rhodri, to show his high-mindedness, did not take the seat reserved for him, but sat like an ordinary chap on an ordinary form. His appearance was bound to make a stir, but he thought the public rather pleased than resentful that he had shown up. Bit of feudal feeling left still, thank God, despite the bolshies. Not that he saw anything to grin about.

The preliminaries were quickly over. " Call Thomas Thomas."

The crowd (it was now he noticed what a big crowd it was) rustled, hummed, and sat back. Two johnnies in mufflers sitting in front turned to stare at the great man, but this was one of the penalties of greatness and he looked through them.

" Thomas Thomas ! "

Tomos Tynypwll went into the dock, and Sir Rhodri gaped.

He was dressed in corduroy trousers, yoked under the knees, a green velveteen waistcoat of his granddad's time, a red and white neckerchief, and a railwayman's jacket. He was bland as a blown-up pig's bladder, yet gay as a gander in May. He looked the sort of chap who'd take dandelions to a harvest home and touch the parson for a pint on the strength of it. There was a happy murmuring along the wooden seats, and Sir Rhodri wasn't sure whether he had gone blue, grey, or cheese-green. The height and build, the shape of

the sconce—and that nose ! Doubting there were two such in Wales, he foolishly felt for his own.

Tomos greeted a friend in court, one of the muffled johnnies, and was sternly reproved, whereat he ducked his head, and his case was begun. For a time Sir Rhodri heard nothing of it : disbelief, humiliation, and rage beat about his skull. Not that this mattered much : he knew the evidence pretty well. Jenkins the keeper and Police Constable Ponty Jones would testify that they had seen the defendant on enclosed land at a suspicious time, that they had given unsuccessful chase, that two newly-dead rabbits had been found in a shed at the defendant's home. The case was cast-iron and stone-doddle. A ticket for Botany Bay in the old days.

He was thinking : How little we know our fathers !

“ Then how do you account for the two rabbits found in your shed ? ” he heard Gracegirdle ask from the bench.

“ Thass easy.” Tomos hoicked his thumb at the keeper. “ He put um there.”

Gracegirdle did his imitation of Silvanus Williams of Pontygwyndy, K.C. “ Quite so, Thomas Thomas. You have proof of this—er—allegation ? ” But Tomos was muttering at Jenkins the keeper, and he had to repeat the question, without irony this time.

“ Proof ? Three bags full, mun. There's a feller—he told this feller he'd put rabbits in my shed one day, Jinkins did.”

“ Why, you flamer ! ” cried Jenkins, but was roughly silenced. “ Order in court,” said Tomos reproachfully.

“ One moment, Thomas Thomas. Who told whom, and what ? ” Tomos goggled at him. “ I mean, who told someone else about putting rabbits in your shed.

This is an extremely serious allegation—charge—I hope you realize that?”

“Seven years hard,” said Tomos. “For Jenkins, your worship.”

Gracegirdle waved this away. “Please, Mr. Thomas. You say the keeper told someone he would put rabbits in your shed. Very well—whom did he tell?”

“My sister Blodwen’s oldest girl’s young man’s uncle, your worship.”

“Your sister Blodwen’s youngest—”

“Oldest, your worship!”

The Clerk whispered in Gracegirdle’s ear. “Yes, yes, I was coming to that. Can you produce this—er—distant witness, Mr. Thomas? This distant relative, I might almost call him.”

Tomos winked at the men in mufflers who squirmed till their corduroys purred like cats. “On’y in a wooden box, your worship. He’s wedi mynd, gone aloft, drawed his wages.” He raised his hand. “As the hymn says—”

“Never mind what the hymn says! This is a court of law, sir, not a cymanfa ganu!” Tomos was heard to mutter something about the singing at Beulah. It was at this point that Sir Rhodri allowed his eye to be caught by the man on the stand. Smiling, Tomos stroked his nose. Sir Rhodri looked away.

“I’m trying—” began Gracegirdle, then altered his sentence. “I’m trying to help you.” He smothered Tomos’s attempt to thank him. “What was the name of this witness you mention as deceased? As dead!” he bellowed, before the defendant’s eyebrows got half way to the ceiling.

“I called him Davy,” Tomos admitted. He pointed

to the men in mufflers. "These boys knew him well, poor feller."

"So you called him Davy?" Gracegirdle was doing Silvanus Williams again, but Plâs Mawr is a long way from Pontygwyndy. "And what did your sister Blodwen's oldest daughter's young man call him, pray?" He snatched the word from Tomos's mouth. "Besides uncle, I mean?"

"He called him Flannen Belly, your worship."

"I must warn you—"

"'Cos he used to wear a bellyband from September till May, your worship."

There was tittering in court. "Quite a long bellyband," said Gracegirdle, to fetch the laugh over to his side of the hedge. The Clerk was whispering. "Yes, yes, I was coming to that. This Davy Flannel—was it he or the keeper who told you about the rabbits?" The Clerk whispered again. "I know, I know. This Davy, then, told you, and Jenkins told him—so you say." Tomos nodded. "Now what precisely did he say? The exact words, please!"

"He told him he'd put rabbits in my shed."

"But my good fellow—the exact words! He didn't use the third person, I imagine?"

"No," said Tomos. Gracegirdle felt he was getting near the bone at last. "There wasn't no third person." People were putting their hands over their mouths, shuffling on their seats. "Except me."

The magistrate dropped to second gear. "I mean, did the speaker say, for example, 'I intend to put rabbits in the shed of Tomos Tynypwll'?"

"No." Sir Rhodri saw Gracegirdle thanking God for a monosyllable. "He didn't mention you at all."

Jinkins may be a mochyn, your worship, but he's not such a mochyn as to bring the Bench into it."

The keeper struggled to his feet, but Ponty pressed him down again. As for Gracegirdle, he looked both hot and faint, but saved his face by threatening to clear the court. "Silence! I must have silence!" He felt everyone was laughing at him, but how the devil could he do other than he was doing? And the Clerk was whispering in his ear. "I know," he snapped. "I was coming to that." He looked sideways at his fellow magistrates, and didn't like what he saw of Mrs. Evans the Farm.

"Now, Tomos," he began quietly, "I've given you a lot of rope, and I shan't give you any more. You understand? I want a straight answer to a straight question. You were seen inside the Plâs grounds on the night in question. Do you deny that after the evidence we have heard?"

"Not guilty," said Tomos, after some thought.

"Yes or no, do you deny it?"

"Deny what?" Tomos smiled at a friend in court, and was fiercely rebuked. "No," he said.

"You don't deny it?"

"I mean No, I wasn't there."

Gracegirdle was breathing very hard now. "You have heard two independent witnesses testify they saw you there, yet you deny it." He almost pleaded with the scallywag before him. "I want to help you. Have you an alibi?"

Tomos's face cleared. "No," he said gratefully, "but I gets backache awful in wet weather. Them old alibis!"

There was laughter in court and Tomos looked well

pleased. Sir Rhodri coughed four or five times, blew his horn, and kept his big red face in his big white handkerchief as long as he decently could. If only the joke wasn't partly on him ! So thinking, he frowned unconvincingly at the mufflers, who nudged each other and stared him out. "Another interruption and I'll clear the court," snarled Gracegirdle. Then : Justice, he thought finely, justice and Hywel Dda, let me do justice. "I meant," he said, "have you anyone to testify that you were in some other place at nine-thirty Tuesday night the twenty-third of June ?" He thought it best to repeat his question, so that this big-nosed imbecile could take it in. And Lord, he prayed, give me strength this day ! But Tomos was so long pondering that he had to ask it a third time, sharply.

"Mistaken identity," said Tomos then.

"You know what that means ?"

"Someone 'bout here the spit image of me, your worship." He winked at the muffled johnnies. "Like Mrs. Davies the Deri's new baby the spit image of Jinkins."

No wonder Gracegirdle lost his temper. "You—you," he began, while the horrified Clerk rushed to his side. "Who the devil could be mistaken for you, you—you—"

It was Tomos's moment. One of the muffled johnnies made a noise like a hen, Gracegirdle clapped his hand to his forehead, and Sir Rhodri felt his stomach turn its toes out, as the defendant turned at leisure towards the crowded seats. For a half-second he stood nodding, and then took his nose between fingers and thumb. "As it might be Sir Rhodri himself, your worship," he said respectfully, but loudly.

The hen became a crazy farmyard, then laughter enveloped the room. This was what they'd been waiting for, the dole-drawers, the mouchers, the rabbit-snatchers—to see old Privilege up at the Plâs with a stoat on the end of his nozzle. Uncollared colliers hooted at royalties, blackcoats at dividends, even the godly had their snigger. There was comment so crapulous from the muffled johnnies that, on the bench, Mrs. Evans' bonnet shot the length of its elastic. The uproar grew, the gavel rapped noiselessly through it, Gracegirdle was on his feet and shaking his fist at Tomos, whose hand, as it kept to his nose, extended its fingers in an old-fashioned and unmistakably derisive way towards him. Then officers began to clear the court, and Sir Rhodri, though they passed him by, went outside too. Well, he'd been made to look a fine fool. Sooner he cleared out of the place the better. But he couldn't clear out of the story—he knew that. They'd be telling of noses in a hundred years around Plâs Mawr. He glowered after his agent, but Bevan was keeping out of harm's way. He scribbled a note on a sheet of paper and handed it to a constable.

He was still there, in the little hall, when Bevan came up behind him. "Case dismissed, Sir Rhodri," he said nervously.

"I want to see that chap Tomos!"

Bevan fluttered his wings. "D'you think it wise, Sir Rhodri?"

"Who are you to judge?"

They had not far to go to find him. He was mouching down the corridor with the muffled johnnies. "Hey, you!" But Sir Rhodri's summons struck even himself as the wrong one. "Mr. Thomas, could I have a word

with you?" "Go ahead, you," said Tomos graciously. Sir Rhodri groped for words.

"I've always fancied one of they cigars," said Tomos, eyeing Sir Rhodri's waistcoat pocket. "And these boys here."

Sir Rhodri lived up to his nose. "Here, take the lot." They were pleased, and said so. They've got me on a string, he thought, but had lost his vexation. After all, if the old dad— "There's just one question, Mr. Thomas, if these gentlemen would perhaps be good enough to drink my health over the way there—" He nodded for Bevan to go with them. "Just one question, Mr. Thomas, if you don't mind."

"Not at all. Ask you, boyo. Got a match?"

Sir Rhodri handed over a boxful. "Keep them. What I wanted to ask, Mr. Thomas—you wouldn't remember, perhaps, but did your mother ever go to work up at the Plâs?"

He saw something in his brother's eyes he couldn't put a name to. He felt pretty shabby, did Sir Rhodri then. "No, not my mam. But my dad was always about the place. That would be before you were born, I fancy." He smiled and blew smoke all over the place, including Sir Rhodri. "Biggest nose in Wales, my old dad."

Sir Rhodri dropped his bowler.

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

ARTHURIAN ROMANCE AND MODERN  
POETRY AND MUSIC. WILLIAM A. NITZE.

University of Chicago Press.

THE FIVE CHAPTERS of this little book—on Avalon and Arthur, Tristan and the Love-Death Motif, Lancelot the Courtly Lover, Perceval, and the Grail—were first composed as lectures to be delivered in the Art Institute, Chicago. Now, in their written form, they are deft, intimate, attractive, but slight. The title is misleading. Professor Nitze does not attempt a conspectus of so vast a subject: instead, he examines and simplifies the growth of this impressive poetic tradition and assesses its value for Western culture. For the vast omissions and avoidance of argument he might properly plead justification in the occasion of his book and its size. Rather than list these omissions and knot-cuttings, I should prefer as a Welshman, born twelve miles and a cow-gallop from Caerleon, to suggest that the peculiar, and possibly the unique, value of Arthur as a national symbol is that he never did a base deed or thought a vile thought. So many of the great figures of legend are products or practitioners of a doctrine of excess—think for a moment of the Volsung and Nibelung cycles, the Angantyr story, Alboin and Rosamund, Ermanaric. When we come nearer history, to Goth and Hun and Vandal, the heroes seem destructive madmen; or we can cast back in a twink to paranoiac imbeciles like Alexander, or ahead to the beastly Frederick. The reader may lengthen the list without difficulty: even Charlemagne is tarred with the Saxon brush. But Arthur, whether we begin with Artorius Castus of the Sixth Victrix Legion, with the *dux bellorum* of Nennius, or Geoffrey of Monmouth's kingly creation, was a good

king and a good man. He embodied a high ideal of civilization. He *was* civilization. He was decency, kindness, understanding, courtesy, and wisdom. He had found the grace of life without losing its reality. He lived at the core. His world broke, not on Modred but on Lancelot; courtly love brought it down, but the legend grew to last, exquisite and unstaled, and give the world perdurable literature.

The Welsh, the Irish, and the Bretons, conceived and cradled Arthur. England, France, and Germany nurtured him. In Innsbruck stands his stature. I can only hope it has never been affronted by the presence of that tin-plated Wagnerian hoodlum who aspires to play Siegfried but has been cast by nature for the Worm.

GWYN JONES

KILVERT'S DIARY. Vol. 3. Edited by WILLIAM PLOMER. Cape. 12s. 6d.

A DIARIST WHOSE entries fill several volumes inevitably pays the penalty of courting the familiarity of his readers. At the end, they are liable to be more severe in their judgment of his mentality and of his mannerisms than they were when acquaintance was fresh. Because Kilvert is now taken for granted, this third and last selection from his diary has been regarded more critically than were its predecessors. I myself am hard put to it to decide whether it is my fault or his that during the years here covered, from 1874 to 1879, he seems to be increasingly sententious as a person and more self-conscious as a diarist.

Certainly, some of the entries make one smile by their silliness; "there is something very magnificent and royal in the stately carriage of a stag's head and

antlers and his trot, too, is very stately and grand"; others are so sickly as to be revolting; "the beautiful child drew her long golden brown curls like curtains before her lovely face till the only thing that could be seen was the shining of her starry blue eyes through the silken veil of the clustering tresses." Nevertheless, Kilvert was a man of his time, the time was the 'seventies, and these have to be taken along with such descriptions as of a wedding "ostentatiously early and quiet and studiously as unlike a wedding as possible" and of Mrs. Venables "full of enthusiasm and hope about a new Iron Church for Newbridge".

In general, it may be noticed that Kilvert suffers from his period's mania for adjectives. We have to pass "a little quaint ancient" farmhouse to enjoy "soft gentle mournful" autumn days among the "quiet peaceful solitary" meadows. A woman is not only a "good kind true" friend but also a "wise tender loving" counsellor, and not often do these plethoric adjectives produce such digestible effect as in the "hard coarse unfeeling inquisitive" ways of Emily Ashe towards Aunt Sarah. The approving use of the word "bright" for a letter or friend is further reminder of the period we are in. But it has to be sustained, for it is also the railway age and to that Kilvert is indebted for much. He sees off a friend "by a broad gauge train and in the smoking carriage, the atmosphere of which I could not have endured for a minute" and he himself makes many excursions. Indeed, when he is not "villaging", he seems to be leaping into trains, for London, for Clifton, for Chippenham, for the Isle of Wight (where he "has to adopt the detestable custom of bathing in drawers. If ladies don't like to see

men naked, why don't they keep away from the sight?").

He visits Stonehenge, where it seems as if "a great silent service" is going on, he sees King Athelstan's grave ("an asparagus bed now waves over the spot"), but most of the excursions were made to keep in touch with the various beautiful girls who occupy an increasing amount of his attention.

The diary opens with his falling in love with a bridesmaid. She fades into the background as Etty Meredith Browne comes into the picture. This occasions a "sweet strange sad story" of "wild trysts" in the snow at Boscombe Chine. Her mother steps in, Etty goes off to marry in India, and Kilvert then lights on the lovely Florence Hill. The drama of these romances is a little obscured by the fact that there are many gaps in the later diaries. Indeed, the greatest drama of all is not mentioned.

The diary ends in March, 1879. On 20th August, he marries a lady whom he has not previously mentioned, and a little more than a month later he dies, aged thirty-eight. William Plomer tells us this in his Introduction. Without being ungrateful to an editor to whom we owe much, I think he would have done us and the diarist a greater service had he put this information at the end. It inevitably overshadows what follows and may, in part, account for the fact that several readers appear to have found in this last volume a tedium and triviality which they would indignantly have denied to have existed in the earlier.

Yet many of the stories have Kilvert's old verve and felicity of phrasing. There are such delightful characters as Dame Fairlamb, "stern and upright with high starched

cap, rod, and spectacles," and Priscilla Price with her memories of Queen Caroline's funeral. There is an endearing picture of a donkey being urged forward by having a bunch of keys rattled in his ear, and another of rats who "most provokingly" carried off the contents of two bowls of apricots intended for a croquet party. There is a happy touch in the tale of the lady who fell downstairs through "grasping on vacancy" and, finally, the acquisition of the harmonium is delightfully managed.

TREVOR JAMES

DESIGN FOR A JOURNEY. M. D. ANDERSON.

Cambridge University Press. 7s. 6d.

THE LITERARY CRITIC seldom troubles to comment favourably or otherwise on the printing and general aspect of the book under discussion, but in this I differ from my fellow critics, since the appearance of a book—if attractive—is in its favour, showing possibly a certain co-operation between author and publisher. Miss Anderson's book is a good example of the excellence which we may take for granted in the publications of the Cambridge University Press, but let us hasten to add that this is very far from being the only merit of the book.

The title may be a little misleading, for the design both of the book and of the journey is rather indefinite. Yet it would be ungrateful to underline this point as there is so much appreciation and enthusiasm in the author's descriptions of the treasures of sculpture and carving—chiefly ecclesiastical—which she discovered during her journey.

Moreover, this book is a good antidote to the war, since Miss Anderson states that the war is responsible for the book . . . she wished to preserve her balance in

a deranged and depressing world, and by setting down this record of a journey in search of beauty she has accomplished her object, demonstrating at the same time the depth and breadth of her knowledge. It is, indeed, this breadth of information which doubles the interest of an interesting book. She has an eye and a memory for similarity in works of art, so that her delightful digressions—especially when they lead to France and Italy—add great interest to her subject.

Although the author deals principally with ecclesiastical sculpture and tradition she is equally at home among the "charm and pleasant nonsense" of Horace Walpole's "toy castle" at Strawberry Hill as in the impressive setting of St. Cross at Winchester.

In a chapter entitled "Handel in Suburbia", which, let me hasten to add, has nothing to do with the performance of oratorios at the late and lamented Crystal Palace, Miss Anderson rescues from the possibility of oblivion the beautifully decorated church of St. Lawrence at Whitchurch near Edgware, which contains also the tomb of the Duke of Chandos. It is fortunate that she stresses the æsthetic importance of this building, as it is now almost lost among the untidy strands of ribbon development.

The author admits to a certain enjoyment in the use of the English language, and she shows her enjoyment in such phrases as, for instance, this reference to Queen Elizabeth: "The diamond-edged personality of Elizabeth and the iron conventionality of her court painters have combined to prune away all traces of humanity from her portraits."

The book is well illustrated with photographs taken by Mr. Arthur Gardner.

DAVID HORNER

THE STREETS OF LONDON. THOMAS BURKE.  
Illustrated. Batsford. 10s. 6d.

IT MIGHT HAVE been feared that the association of such a subject as this with such an author as Thomas Burke would have produced an excess of "local colour". But Mr. Burke has not chosen the easy way, perhaps because he has trod it sufficiently, perhaps because *The Spirit of London*, in this same series, used it beyond improvement; whatever the reason, the result is that, for welcome once in a book about London, we are not asked to attend at Covent Garden at 5 a.m., at the Caledonian Market on Friday, or Whitechapel on Sunday. There are only two references to Soho, neither "atmospheric", and but one to Piccadilly.... Mr. Burke writes of *The Streets of London* "through the centuries". The book falls into five parts: Before 1600, Under the Stuarts, The Eighteenth Century, Corinthian and Victorian and, the last and least, being only twelve pages, Within Living Memory. This approach enables the author, not perhaps to give us the essence of the streets, as we know them, but to trace their development. Wisely, he does not seek to "people them with ghosts", but sticks to facts. Many of these facts will be familiar to students of both history and of London; they are none the worse for being assembled in one volume.

I must say that it is a defect of the historical method not carried out at its most scholarly, that it does not allow room for a chapter on Arcades, those covered streets of London; or of the Regent's street-planning operations, or of the origin of the King's Road (Chelsea). I think that the history of Chelsea deserved mention, even though Reginald Blount has written it once and

for all, and if the author finds it odd that Norman Douglas should write a book upon London street-games it is surely odder that he himself makes no reference to *High Street* or *London Perambulator*.

Fleet Street, no less than Vauxhall Bridge Road, has a flavour of its own . . . but Mr. Burke is here eschewing flavour (that may be found in *The Spirit of London*) and modernity: if he took in the latter, he would have had to include the achievements of the L.C.C.; the effect of the Underground on street-life; one-way traffic, parking, shopping-centres and much else beyond what was, apparently, the scope of this book. What he does give us is the historical background of streets at present in process of being destroyed. There is much that he does not give us—Whittington, after all, instigated the “paved with gold” myth and Shakespeare once walked the streets of London, not to hold horses’ heads but in King James the First’s coronation procession, a fact it is well to remember. But nearly all the omissions come from an avoidance of the picturesque, and what we are given is good. It is made better by illustrations which do not include Ardizzone, but range from early prints to Canaletto, Hogarth, Rowlandson, Phil May, and modern photographs.

TREVOR JAMES

A LONDON FAMILY. M. VIVIAN HUGHES. Oxford University Press. 7s. 6d.

A PART OF the secret of London’s extraordinary ability to withstand the raids is in this book and if we were interested in propaganda, it would be a volume to distribute wholesale in the States. It is gay and unexpected, tremendous difficulties are passed over in

a sentence so quietly that some, perhaps, will not discover what is really being said.

Mrs. Hughes continues her story, not quite from the point where she stopped in her last book but from the moment when, a widow with three schoolboy sons, she moved out to Cuffley, then a hamlet fifteen miles from London. Not the least interesting part of the book is its chronicle of the changes there until it became one of the innumerable new small towns adding another ring to Greater London.

It is full of her amusing experiences both as householder (how much we sympathize with her struggles to get into a new-built house) and as inspector of schools. She makes valuable comments on the so neglected art of teaching and, with a few lines, gives us character after character whom we would have liked to have known—or to have avoided. Perhaps the story of her lecture on Waste and Luxury is the funniest and saddest of the new experiences here recorded.

Mrs. Hughes has a delightful account of seeing Greta Garbo on the screen for the first time; it reminds us of her own work. Either one is a fan or one isn't, but those who wait impatiently, like the present reviewer, for each new volume, will suggest at once that we want to know what happened to Cuffley and the grandchildren, after war started and beg for more stories of the correspondence friends who wrote her such strange letters.

FOLIOS OF NEW WRITING. Edited by JOHN LEHMANN. Hogarth Press. 5s.

THE SCARCITY-VALUES of war usurp the quality-choice of peace. Who ate only best farm butter is overjoyed

to buy two illicit ounces of margarine. And literature goes the way of food. *New Writing*, autumn 1940, is a war product, its poor quality treasured for lack of better.

The autumn harvest includes stories by Pritchett, Phelan, and B. L. Coombes. Pritchett is far the best, with a story about the leather business, Lawrencian in situation, Dickensian in characterization. Phelan is neat in a lunatic asylum. But Coombes, Julia Strachey, Derek Clifford, Peter Viertel, and others betray contempt for the form of the short story, due, one feels, more to ignorance than to conscious experimentation. Derek Clifford chooses the form of a prose poem with the loose style of a short story. Julia Strachey is inconclusive, a fragment of a novel: Ismat Chughtai, too violent in his transitions: Isobel Leslie episodic, Willy Goldman observant but pointless, and B. L. Coombes sententiously documentary. ("‘You take care,’" I answered, ‘you know that our work is to ease suffering, not to increase accidents.’") The New Zealander, Roderick Finlayson, contributes a pleasant Maori folk-tale.

Poems are by Day Lewis, Charles Brasch, Laurie Lee, Rex Warner, pleasant enough but not exciting.

At the end, Spender continues his internal duologue between the poet and the politician, more interesting because it is Spender than because of its content. Marxism still means to him a political philosophy, compelling to his intellect, but as harsh and minatory as conscience and so to the enemy of imagination, the snuff to poetry. As long as Marxism remains a creed instead of becoming the basis of a way of life issuing in actions with a positive emotional content, Spender will continue torn unhappily in this conflict.

The preface to autumn *New Writing* and the prime reason why the book should be bought is a paper by Virginia Woolf on the Auden-Isherwood-Spender group. Most previous criticism of this group has come from those who cannot appreciate its literary merits or emotional-cultural background and was answered with some gusto and more bluster by the poets themselves. Mrs. Woolf combines extreme sympathy for and understanding of the group with a critical intelligence unmarred by group-loyalty. Her essay is cogently argued, and while it does not try to cover every aspect of the group's ascendancy and eclipse (for example, there is no discussion of the influence which the book-market, of 7s. 6d. novels and circulating libraries, had on all writers of the thirties), it certainly defines for the first time the attitude which later readers, unmoved by the controversy of contemporary publication, are most likely to adopt.

A. CALDER-MARSHALL

ACROSS THE BLACK WATERS. MULK RAJ ANAND.  
Cape. 8s. 6d.

WAR IS AS great a leveller as its elder brother, Death, working slower and more subtly to reduce men to their lowest common factors. Yet in this very levelling of humanity resides a discovery, which peace and prosperity are apt to hide. In societies divided by class, caste, and religious distinctions, peace stresses dissimilarity. Wealth and privilege bolster a false pride. "Thank God," each thinks, "I am not as other men." Yet each is much more like others than he is different, seeking happiness and security, eating, loving, sleeping

and excreting. Disaster, the precipitate earthquake or the slow attrition of war, lays bare to each man his humanity; reveals that whatever his differences may be, however extraordinary his genius, he grows from the same soil as everybody else.

The Marxists may be correct in tracing the tendency of revolutions to follow wars to economic causes: but the psychological predisposition to revolt—or combine to reform a society—is caused by the rediscovery of comradeship through suffering so severe that the distinctions of peace are obliterated. This comradeship appears first among the rank and file of the combatant armies, where artificially fostered national antagonisms are continually in conflict with the realization that the rankers on either side have a common experience in the military society of which they are the lowest members.

*Across the Black Waters*, the second volume of the trilogy which Anand began with *The Village*, describes the experiences of his hero, Lalu, after he has joined the Army during the last war and the fighting at Messines and Festubert. But its theme is the discovery of comradeship, as I have outlined it above. The barriers between Moslem and Hindu, between white and Indian, country and country, are broken down through common experience. The war is seen through the eyes of simple Indian soldiers, bewildered, afraid, cold and unhappy, but continually and with wonder emerging through their experience of death and hardship into a wider understanding of the earth on which they live.

It might be thought that a war book devoted to the experiences of Indian privates would have too narrow an outlook to appeal to an English public. But I have had evidence that this is not so. In my barrack-room,

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men, whose reading is normally confined to thrillers with titles like *Haunting Fingers*, have picked it up and they have gone on reading it in every minute of their spare time until they have finished it. Though his characters are always Indians, they are always soldiers; his quiet realism, his assessment of fear and homesickness and loyalty and groping intelligence, enable the white conscript to identify himself with the Indians.

The moods of soldiers are a strange compound, shaped in my mind like the grill of a gas-stove; the flat surface being the plane mass mood, changing rapidly from fear to pleasure, discomfort to hilarious delight, but always beneath are the little pendent nipples, individual reactions hanging from the surface mood. At all times life is going on on both these planes; but at some times individual reactions become more important and at others they are gathered into the mass. Anand succeeds magnificently in combining the two, so that one is never forgetful of the one when he is treating of the other.

At the same time these moods vary most extraordinarily in depth; the majority are trivial—for just as communal life reduces the collective intelligence, it also reduces the collective emotional age—yet interlaced with these trivialities are moments of intense feeling, such as no individual in time of peace is capable of; courage and fear, blind rage and passionate love. With extraordinary command of technique, Anand gives all these moments their value, deliberately creating by short sections the bewildering alternation of feelings, which go to make military life.

As I have said, the theme of the book is the deepening of the sense of comradeship between Lalu and the other Indian soldiers, and Lalu and the British and French.

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The book ends with Lalu's capture, after he has been wounded in an attack.

During a war people have not much stomach for war-books ; but *Across the Black Waters* will not repel the general reader, precisely because Anand, while recognizing the hellishness of war, is primarily interested in the development of comradeship. In the firm cultivation of that feeling rests the hope that this war will produce a saner world instead of a sourer Versailles.

A. CALDER-MARSHALL

PURPLE DUST. A Wayward Comedy in Three Acts. SEAN O'CASEY. Macmillan. 6s.

SLAPSTICK AND SYMBOLISM here combine to form not a "wayward comedy" (the author for once understates) but wild and wilful farce. We are introduced to two characters called Stoke and Poges ; my own taste is such that I would prefer not to be introduced to them, but let that pass. These are stock Englishmen of the Irish stage. The Irish characters are stock Irishmen of the Irish stage, speaking a biting burlesque of the stock poetic dialogue of a certain kind of Irish drama ; "Ashamed I am of the force that sent a hand to hit a girl of grace, fit to find herself walkin' beside all the beauty that ever shone before the eyes o' man since Helen herself unbound her thresses to dance her wild an' willin' way through the shstreets o' Throy !"

O'Casey, it will be seen, spares not even himself. The fun is indeed furious, but it would be a good deal faster if the butts on all sides were less conventional. They have had fun poked at them so often that they are mere riddled effigies. They can no longer stand up

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on their own, and here they collapse under the weight of heavy humour put on them. Well and good to have two English refugees, with their mistresses, determined to renovate a Tudor mansion and revive the glories of old Irish country life. Well and good, if need be, or invention flags, to introduce such well-worn jokes as a cow mistaken for a bull (Act 2) or clumsy workmen damaging a valuable piece of furniture in their efforts to move it (Act 3). No doubt it would act well, if you like farces of the Ralph Lynn order. But if you don't, it doesn't help to mix the Abbey and Aldwych theatres, and make symbolical such events as the rising of a river, or the desertion of elderly men by their mistresses who run off with strong workmen (*exeunt singing*, "Come from the dyin' an' fly from th' dead, Far away O!" etc.). I cannot help feeling that the author wouldn't have shirked the issue, by confusing it in this way, if he hadn't had an uneasy suspicion that his play had not quite come off. So he made it a tract. Even so it would act well, and the Marx Brothers, I am sure, would make much of it.

EDWARD FARRER

### MARY STUART, YOUNG QUEEN OF SCOTS.

MILDRED CRISS. George G. Harrap and Co. 6s.

THIS STORY OF the early life of Mary, Queen of Scots, presents some difficulties. It is extremely well done and contrives to make the character come alive. It is far removed from the usual piece of historical paste-board that we find too often in literature for children. Yet, just because children are impressionable it seems a pity that the building of that England upon which

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we, at this moment, must rely, is so neglected, few accounts of life in the Elizabethan age exist for the young, apart from adventures on the Spanish Main. This reservation apart, the author has written an excellent account of the experiences of Mary at the French court; the great restrictions then placed upon the young and the early forcing of maturity are recognized and well suggested.

ERNEST HUDSON

LANCASHIRE LATHER. T. THOMPSON. George Allen and Unwin. 5s.

MR. THOMPSON'S LITTLE book of Lancashire dialect sketches, most of which have appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, is a pleasant companion to Miss Dora M. Broome's recently published *Lancashire Folks*; whilst she writes mainly of the female side of Lancashire society, he treats of the male, discussing in the barber's shop and over the bar subjects of such general interest as Propaganda, the activities of the Gestapo, or the musical value of Handel's *Messiah*, and informing them all with a native potato-pie homeliness. The best story in the book, however, has a heroine; Matty, who as a little girl longed for a piano to make her the envy of the neighbours, and as an old woman got one, with the money paid in compensation when her man was killed in the mill. The odd mixture here of bitterness and fun is characteristic of Lancashire people, and explains why the sentimental Southerner, from his comfortably upholstered life, so far misunderstands them as to think them hard.

ELIZABETH COXHEAD

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